







*The Duchess of Malfi*

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# *The Duchess of Malfi*

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John Webster

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## PREFATORY NOTE

THE Text of *The Duchess of Malfi* was first printed as a Quarto in 1623. It was reprinted with some variations in 1640 and 1678. Dyce's text, that followed in the preparation of this edition, was a careful reprint of the first Quarto, which had no doubt the advantage of the dramatist's personal supervision.

The editor takes this opportunity to acknowledge his great indebtedness to the work of two students of Webster, viz., E. E. Stoll: *John Webster, The Periods of his Work*; and C. Crawford: *Collectanea, Vols. I and II.*

## JOHN WEBSTER

Thunder: the flesh quails, and the soul bows down.  
Night: east, west, south, and northward, very  
night.  
Star upon struggling star strives into sight,  
Star after shuddering star the deep storms drown.  
The very throne of night, her very crown,  
A man lays hand on, and usurps her right.  
Song from the highest of heaven's imperious  
height  
Shoots, as a fire to smite some towering town.  
Rage, anguish, harrowing fear, heart-crazing crime  
Make monstrous all the murderous face of Time  
Shown in the spherical orbit of a glass  
Revolving. Earth cries out from all her graves.  
Frail, on frail rafts, across wide-wallowing waves,  
Shapes here and there of child and mother pass.

*Algernon Charles Swinburne*

## NOTES AND GLOSSARY



## NOTES AND GLOSSARY

### ACT I

#### SCENE I.

1. The two opening speeches probably contain an historical allusion of which use was formerly made in fixing the date of the composition of the play. The passage was—and still is—regarded as a reference to the assassination of Concini, Maréchal d'Ancre, who, as the hated favourite of the Queen Mother, Marie de Medici, was slain as a traitor by order of the young king, Louis XIII, in April, 1617. Since this allusion was first noted, the date of the actor Ostler's death has been discovered, and that discovery disposes of this evidence as to the date of the play (see *Introduction*, p. 3). Nonetheless, the allusion to the Concini affair seems clear enough to justify the conclusion that the passage was inserted shortly after April, 1617, for a revival of the play.

2. **you . . . France**: a detail from Painter's narrative.

9. **which**: the antecedent is *palace*.

36. **I wore . . . shirt**: cp. i *Henry IV*, IV, ii, 48.

40. **dog-days**: the rising of the dog-stars was supposed to mark days of ill-luck.

43. **I have known . . . along with them**: an adaptation of a passage

which Webster had found in Florio's translation of *Montaigne* I, xxxviii: "It was told Socrates, that one was no whit amended by his travell: *I believe it well* (said he), *for he carried himselfe with him*."

59. **pardon**: an emendation of the reading of the first Quarto (1623). Another possible reading is *pleader*.

74. **Gaston de Foix . . . Naples**: there is some confusion of historical facts here. In 1501, the French 'recovered' Naples from the Neapolitan Frederick under the terms of the Treaty of Granada, a compact between Ferdinand of Aragon and Louis XII of France. In 1512, Gaston de Foix, the French general, then aged twenty-three, defeated the combined forces of Spain and Naples at the Battle of Ravenna (cp. *Introduction*, p. 5.), an action in which the brilliant young general lost his life. In spite of his victory, the French did not make any further conquests in that campaign, but on the contrary, were quickly driven out of Italy. It is plain that Gaston de Foix could have had no part in the 'recovery' of Naples in 1501, since he was then but twelve years old.

82. **malcontents**: cp. *Introduction*, p. 7.

83. **like moths . . . wearing**: in

the Quartos, a new scene begins after this line: but Delio and Antonio remain upon the stage and therefore there is no break of scene.

Note omission of relative 'which' before *do hurt*.

90. *who . . . ring*: in the sport of tilting at the ring a horseman riding at full speed endeavoured to carry off on the point of his spear a ring suspended from the cross-piece of a post. Antonio's good horsemanship is mentioned by Painter who says, "for riding and managing of greate horse, he had not his fellow in Italy."

114. *to lie . . . all in tents*: the pun intended depends upon the use of the word *tent* in surgery to mean 'lint,' or other material used in probing a wound. The verb *tent* has the meaning of "probe"; cp. *Hamlet*, II ii, 626:

"I'll tent him to the quick."

122. *Pliny's opinion*: found in his *National History*, a text accessible to Webster, both in the original and in the English translation of Philemon Holland (1601).

160. *will play . . . crowns at tennis*: heavy stakes were often laid at tennis: cp. *The White Devil*, II, i, 181:

"I shall not shortly  
Racket away five hundred crowns  
at tennis,  
But it shall rest upon record!"

164. *the spring in his face . . . contandering of toads*: this image was suggested to Webster by an image in Chapman's *Bussy d'Ambois*, III, i:

"Thy gall  
Turns all thy blood to poison,  
which is cause

Of that toad-pool that stands in thy complexion."

168. *intelligencers*: "spies": cp. *intelligence*, line 230 below.

202. *galliard*: "a quick, lively dance": cp. *Twelfth Night*, I, iii, 117.

209. *her nights, nay . . . ladies' shrifts*: suggested by a couplet in Donne: cp. *Anatomy of the World, Second Anniversary*, lines 463-4:

"Whose twilights were more clear  
than our mid-day,  
Who dreams devoutlier than most  
use to pray."

For Webster's indebtedness to Donne, see *Introduction*, p. 29.

215. *she stains the time . . . come*: Webster used this image in almost the same form in *A Monumental Column*, line 278, where Prince Henry's 'beams' are said to:

"Stain the time past, and light the  
time to come."

Webster was very apt to repeat himself in this way. Indeed, such repetitions may be regarded as characteristic of his work.

226. *leaguer*: "camp"; cp. also III, iii, 14.

*you are for Milan*: in the early Quarto, these words are ascribed to Ferdinand, but they come much more naturally from the Duchess.

230. *intelligence*: "spy"; cp. *intelligencers*, line 168 above.

244. *you see the oft shaking . . . root*: the idea appears also in Chapman's *Bussy d'Ambois* (published 1607); but it may have been proverbial.

276. *the devil . . . all sins o'er*: cp. *The White Devil*, V, vi, 55:

"O, the cursed devil  
Which doth present us with all  
other sins  
Thrice-candied o'er."

278. **complimental**: "ornamental," "belonging to accomplishments."

292. **We are to part from you**: Cariola's words to Antonio (I, i, 216) might seem to imply that the ensuing dialogue marks the beginning of a new scene in the gallery of the Duchess's palace. But there is nothing to suggest that Ferdinand is supposed to leave the stage between lines 305 and 308.

297. **luxurious**: "incontinent," ✓ "lecherous"; cp. *Macbeth* IV, III, 58.

301. **motion**: "resolve."

312. **Vulcan's engine**: the net in which Mars and Venus were caught.

343. **wink'd...husband**: "gained a husband by bold encouragement."

430. **progress**: the word happily suggests the princely qualities which the Duchess has dis-

covered in the great master of her household: "make a royal journey through yourself."

457. **Quietus est**: a technical term used to indicate that accounts had been examined and found correct: cp. *Hamlet*, III, i, 75.

469. **per verba presenti**: the correct phrase is *per verba de presenti*. Until 1753, a marriage *per verba de presenti* (i.e. a marriage effected by the man and woman accepting each other in a form of words relating to present, not to future, time) was legally valid in England.

490. **Alexander and Lodowick**: the tale appears in a ballad form—the ballad of "The Two Faithful Friends, the pleasant history of Alexander and Lodwicke, who were so like one another, that none could know them asunder; wherein is declared how Lodwicke married the Princess of Hungaria, in Alexander's name, and how each night he layd a naked sword betweene him and the Princesse, because he would not wrong his friend."

## ACT II

### SCENE I

5. **night-cap . . . largely**: the night-cap was sometimes worn during the day instead of a wig: this practice seems to have been particularly favoured by the *malade imaginaire*.

18. **roaring boys**: a cant term for the swashbucklers and 'bloods' of the time who sought on all possible occasions to annoy the decent citizens of the metropolis by provoking quarrels and causing violent disturbances.

your roaring boys . . . so

**valiant**: "the swashbucklers of the streets may talk as though they fare sumptuously every day, but the truth is that it is not good living but hunger that incites them to violence."

24. **prime night-caps**: a cant term the exact significance of which is not known. It would appear to stand for some type or types of unpopular bullies. Webster uses the word again in *The Devil's Last-Care*, II, i, but that passage leaves the meaning equally uncertain.

30. **there was a lady of France . . .** level: this detail was suggested by a passage in Florio's *Montaigne*, I, xi: "Who hath not heard of her at *Paris*, which only to get a fresher hew of a new skin, endured to have her face flead all over?"

35. **careening**: laying a ship on its side for repairs or to clean the hull.

36. **morphewed**: "ulcerated," "scabby."

36. **disembogue**: "to discharge": usually the word is used of a river discharging its waters into the sea; here the metaphor is drawn from a leaky hull careened for repairs and in order to discharge the water from her hold.

37. **there's rough-cast phrase . . .** **plastic**: "I'm plastering you with the rough language your face painting deserves": *rough-cast*: "rough plaster" used on walls

40. **a shop of witchcraft, etc.**: this repulsive satiric passage was suggested by a very similar passage in Tofte's *Ariosto's Satyres* (1608).

43. **dead pigeon . . . plague**: it would seem that in cases of infection with plague a popular remedy of the time was to apply hot bricks to the feet and then a *live pigeon cut in two parts*.

47. **renew his foot-cloth**: "buy new housings for his horse or mule."

50. **observe my meditation**: this inartistic foisting of a passage of pure satire into the text can be paralleled both from the earlier creators of malcontent mediators, and from Webster's other work: cp. *Devil's Law-Case*, II, iii:

"I have a certain meditation,  
If I can think of 't, somewhat to  
this purpose."

60. **ulcerous wolf**: 'lupus' or "cancer."

**swinish measles**: *swinish* because the disease affects swine.

68. **wells at Lucca**: the baths at Lucca were famous at the time and are mentioned by Montaigne in his account of his Italian journey.

71. **teeming blue**: livid, like those of a pregnant woman: cp. Prospero's description of Sycorax as "this blue-eyed hag," *The Tempest*, I, ii, 269. *Blue* in this sense of 'dark,' 'livid,' is probably of Norse origin: the word appears in Middle English in the form *blo*; for example, in the West Midland poem called *Cleanness*, line 1017, the waters of the Dead Sea are described as "Blo, blubrande, and blak."

77. **and so long since married**: Antonio and Delio are supposed to be talking apart from Bosola, as they enter. The large, open stage of the Elizabethan theatre facilitated such a grouping of the characters. At "now sir," line<sup>4</sup> 81, Antonio turns from Delio to Bosola.

83. **foul tetter**: "scab," "scurf" cp. *Hamlet*, I, v, 71.

**the opinion of wisdom . . . honest**: this passage is constructed from three unconnected sentences which Webster noted in his reading of Florio's *Montaigne*, II, xii:

"The opinion of wisdom is the plague of man . . . Whence proceeds the subtlest folly but from the subtlest wisdom? . . . If simplicitie directeth us to have no evill, it also addresseth us according to our condition to a most happy state."

100. **you would look . . . your light**: cp. *The Devil's Law-Case* V, v:

"While they aspire to do themselves most right,  
The devil, that rules i' the air,  
stands in their light."

103. **lord of the ascendant**: the *ascendant* is the sign of the Zodiac that is rising above the horizon at any particular moment. The *lord of the ascendant* is a planet that is said to dominate the sign of the Zodiac in the ascendant at the moment of nativity.

104. **you were lineally . . . cannon**: in this speech, two unconnected passages in Florio's *Montaigne*, II, xii, are cleftly woven together, their union being completed by the addition of the finely individualised phrase concerning the 'vicar' that 'goes to law for a tithe-pig.' The two passages in Florio's *Montaigne* read:

\* The soules of Emperours and Cobblers are all cast in one same mould. Considering the importance of Princes' actions, and their weight, wee persuade ourselves they are brought forth by some as weighty and important causes; wee are deceived: They are moved, stirred and removed in their motions by the same springs and words, that wee are in ours. The same reason that makes us chide and braule, and fall out with any of our neighbours, causeth a warre to follow betweene Princes; the same reason that makes us whip or beat a lackey, maketh a Prince (if hee apprehend it) to spoyle and waste a whole Province. . . .

In rowling on they (sc. the laws) swell and grow greater and greater as doe our rivers: follow them upward into their source and you shall find them but a bubble of water." . . .

20. **when?**: an exclamation of

impatience: cp. *Richard II*, I, 1, 162: "When, Harry, when?"

122. **swound**: the Quarto of 1623 reads *sound* for *swound* in the sense of swoon; the form *swound* was formerly in common use: cp. *Romeo and Juliet*, II, ii, 56.

123. **mother**: "hysteria"; "the disease *hysterica passio*"; cp. *King Lear*, II, iv, 57.

## SCENE II.

1. **techiness**: "crossness."

2. **apparent**: "clear"; cp. II, iii, 67, and III, i, 54.

7. **the glass-house**: a reference to the glass-house that stood near the Blackfriars' Theatre.

14. **the orange-tree . . . all together**: the same idea appears in *A Monumental Column*, lines 43, 44:

"But like the orange-tree his fruits he bore,—  
Some gather'd, he had green, and blossoms store."

30. **presently**: "immediately."

59. **black-guard**: the drudges in a great household: cp. the description of Vittoria's first husband in *The White Devil*, I, i.: "that within this twenty years rode with the black guard in the duke's carriage, 'mongst spits and dripping-pans."

80. **set . . . nativity**: "make an astrological calculation of the fortune attending his birth."

## SCENE III.

5. **have part of it**: "learn something about it."

20. **setting a figure . . . jewels**: the *figure* is "a horoscope."

as it is in II, ii, 80. Antonio says he has been making a horoscope to direct him to the discovery of the thief of the duchess's jewels.

21. **question** : "investigation."

22. **do . . . radical** : "do you find that it strikes down to the root of the matter?"

41. **you libel well** : apparently "you draw up a document well." Antonio, it must be supposed, hands to Bosola the horoscope concerning the supposed theft of jewels, as if he would have the other copy it, adding at the same time the propitiatory remark, "you libel well." Bosola declines the proffered paper and derides Antonio's imputations of his guilt by asserting his readiness to sign a copy of the horoscope drawn up by Antonio himself.

45. **here** : i.e. on his handkerchief.

55. **false friend** : i.e. the dark lantern that Bosola is carrying. By its light he discovers the horoscope of the new-born babe on a piece of paper accidentally dropped by Antonio, as the latter hastened to the Duchess's "lodgings."

58. **Anno Dom. 1504 . . . this year** : this passage which fixes the date of the action does not agree historically with the reference to Gaston de Foix (cp. I, i, 74 and note).

62. **the lord of the first house** : i.e. Saturn, a planet of evil omen. *The first house* is the "house of life." It is said to be *in the ascendant* as it is rising above the horizon at the moment of birth.

**combust** : i.e. within fifteen degrees of the Sun.

63. **Mars** : another planet of evil omen.

**in a human sign** : i.e. in one of the signs of the Zodiac

which have human forms; e.g. Virgo, Sagittarius, Aquarius.

64. **the tail . . . Dragon** : i.e. the point of ecliptic longitude which the moon occupies in crossing the ecliptic from N. to S.: that is, it is one of the two points at which the moon's orbit intersects the earth's orbit, the other being known as the "Dragon's head." The "Dragon's tail" is malevolent.

**the eighth house** : "the house of death."

67. **precise** : "strait-laced," "purtanical."

#### SCENE IV.

16. **that fantastic glass . . . Florentine** : Galileo's telescope was first exhibited in 1609.

65. **persuade . . . cullises** : old receipt-books advised the use of pieces of gold as ingredients in the making of savoury meat broths (or *cullises*) for the sick.

#### SCENE V.

1. **digg'd up a mandrake . . . mad with 't** : it was a popular superstition that the mandrake shrieked as it was uprooted, and that its shrieks caused death or madness. Cp. *Romeo and Juliet*, IV, iii, 47:

"And shrieks, like mandrakes torn out of the earth,  
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad."

3. **loose . . . hilts** : "incontinent."

10. **conveyances** : "artifices"—to obtain the satisfaction of her desires.

13. **choler** : Ferdinand desires rhubarb as a purge for his choler, since according to the Elizabethan notion of 'humours'

that passion was due to an excess of bile in the liver.

13. **the cursed day**: the date of the child's birth (set down by Bosola in his letter to Ferdinand).

25. **cupping-glass**: used in blood-letting.

32. **unequal nature . . . left side**: perhaps a reference to *Ecclesiastes*, x, 2.

44. **quoit the sledge**: = 'toss the

bar': a popular lower-class amusement in the seventeenth century.

54. **rupture**: "breaking forth into passion." Dyce's emendation of *rapture* (whirlwind passion) is attractive.

66. **vantage**: vent, air-hole.

75. **fix . . . general eclipse**: "plunge by in a total eclipse": "do her to death"

## ACT III

## SCENE I

2. **stranger long at court**: see *Introduction*, p. 13.

27. **what censure they**: "what is their judgment": cp. *Hamlet*, I, iii, 89.

28. **they do observe . . . way**: "they note that I am acquiring great wealth and suggest that it is not gained honestly."

41. **Count Malatesti**: he is not mentioned in Painter.

42. **he's a mere stick . . . him**: used again almost verbatim in *The Devil's Law-Case*, II, i.

49. **Pasquil's paper-bullets**: Pasquinades—i.e. lampoons, called after Pasquino, a fifteenth-century cobbler (or tailor) satirist near whose house, shortly after his death, a mutilated statue was dug up, whereon lampoons were posted.

54. **apparent**: cp. II, ii, 2, and II, iii, 67.

75. **lenitive**: "soothing (but insidious)!"

85. **a girdle 'bout the world**: cp. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, II, i, 175. The phrase is also used in Chapman's *Bussy d'Ambois*.

## SCENE II

7. **lord of mis-rule**: a jesting allusion to the office which a mock lord exercised as master of the Christmas revels.

14. **peevish**: foolish.

**Daphne . . . bay tree**: the nymph *Daphne*, a daughter of the Thessalian river-god Peneus, so deeply moved Apollo with her beauty that he pursued her in ardent haste, and was indeed on the point of overtaking her when her prayer for aid was heard, and she was transformed into a laurel--thereafter a favourite tree of the god.

15. **Syrinx . . . empty reed**: *Syrinx* was an Arcadian nymph, who, being pursued by Pan, fled into the river Ladon, where at her own prayer she was turned into a reed. It was of this reed that Pan fashioned his "pipe" or flute.

16. **Anaxarete . . . marble**: *Anaxarete*, a maiden of Cyprus, showed such haughtiness to her lover, Iphis, that he hanged himself at her door. Her indifference at his death so incensed Venus that she transformed her into a stone.

29. **motion**: probably here used in the sense of "picture." It was frequently used in the sense of a "puppet-show" (cp. *The Winter's Tale*, IV, ii, 103), and the use here is probably a kind of extension of that use.

49. **arras**: probably orris-root powder.

57. **your gossips**: "god-parents of your children."

58. 't is welcome: see *Introduction*, p. 13.

76. **basilisk**: a fabulous creature whose baleful stare wrought the death of its victim.

77. **confederacy**: here appears to mean "conspiracy."

113. **Reputation, Love, and Death**: cp. *Introduction*, p. 29.

125. **shook hands with Reputation**, "bade farewell to your good name."

136. **gallery**: i.e. the gallery above the stage in the Elizabethan theatre.

162. **my brother's bills . . . against**: i.e., Ferdinand now finds it impossible to raise money on credit, because Antonio has failed to repay loans raised from Neapolitan Jews in the joint names of his mistress and her brother.

167. **enginous wheels**: *enginous*, i.e., belonging to machinery: and so "swift."

**short syllables . . . periods**: "there is no time for considered speech."

169. **Tasso**: cp. *Jerusalem Delivered*, II, xxii.

170. **Magnanima mensogna**: translated in the next three words of the text.

176. **audit-time . . . quietus**: cp. I, i, 458 and note.

180. **let him**: probably "let him go," though the meaning is not quite clear.

186. **the necessity . . . humours**:

In reply to the Duchess's feigned accusation, Antonio makes a show of deplored his hard lot, magnanimously ascribing it not to her fickle humour but to the evil fate ordained for him by inauspicious stars.

204. **a pig's head gaping**: the Second Officer implies that Antonio betrayed himself as a Jew, when he expressed his dislike for the sight of a dressed pig's head with an apple in its mouth.

206. **you had been . . . sake**: "had you gained as his steward what he has gained as yours, you would have been much better off."

216. **the chippings . . . chain**: i.e. as master of the household he has not been content with the crusts and crumbs from the kitchen wherewith to furbish up his chain of office, but has made a goodly picking which he is now whisking away with him. •

228. **sort**: "company," "throng": cp. *Richard II*, IV, i, 246.

229. **Princes pay . . . lies**: i.e., princes pay their flatterers with flattery: the flatterers pretend their masters have no vices, and the princes pretend their flatterers tell no lies.

234. **Pluto**: strictly, this should be *Plutus*. Plutus being the god of wealth, and Pluto of the lower world; but even the Greeks confused the two. Bacon makes use of the same fable in his essay, *Of Riches*.

247. **his breast . . . noise of 't**: the same idea appears in *A Monumental Column*, lines 79, 80.

258. **Bermoothes**: i.e., the Bermudas: cp. *The Tempest*, I, ii, 229.

285. **curious engine**: *curious* here has the sense of ingenious, clever, cunning. Cp. L. *curiosus*.

287. **reverend**: "revered."

290. **When heralds . . . to men :** "when the Heralds' Office shall no longer fulfil its function of providing coats of arms."

294. **wear . . . my heart :** cp. *Hamlet*, III, ii, 77.

300. **Loretto :** throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the shrine of *Our Lady of Loretto* was frequented by great throngs of pilgrims and honoured by them with an immense number of offerings.

In Painter's narrative it is Cariola who makes the suggestion of the pilgrimage, and the Duchess's adoption of the suggestion is primarily due to her desire to conceal the birth of a third child. It must, however, be admitted that Painter's heroine, like Webster's, is ready to hazard all in her anxiety to join her husband in Ancona.

306. **Lrgos :** cp. II, i, 68, and note.

### SCENE III

1. **the emperor :** i.e., Charles V

4, 5. **the Marquis of Pescara . . . the famous Lannoy :** the commanders of the victorious Imperialist army at the Battle of Pavia, 1525, where the French army was destroyed, and the French king, Francis I, was taken prisoner by Lannoy. The allusion to the Battle of Pavia is an anachronism which is not to be explained by reference to Painter. On the contrary, had Webster had regard for historical accuracy, he might have avoided this historical error by paying closer attention to the details in his "source." For Painter fixes the flight to Ancona as taking place during the pontificate of Julius II, i.e., not later than 1513, the year of this Pope's death.

7. **plot :** "plan."

14. **leaguer :** cp. note on I, i, 226.

**City-chronicle :** This reference is obscure.

29. **pot-gun :** "pop-gun," "mortar."

32. **guarded sumpter-cloth :** i.e., a horse-cloth with facings or trimmings : cp. *The Merchant of Venice*, II, ii, 147 : "Give him a livery more guarded than his fellows."

Silvio implies that Malatesti has no martial spirit to fit, only to make a goodly show, like a rich horse-cloth, at the ceremonial removing of the Court

37. **foxes . . . for 't :** cp. *Judges*, xv, 4.

48. **salamander . . . fire :** an allusion to the popular belief that the salamander was able to live in fire.

52. **he lifts . . . storm :** see *Introduction*, p. 28.

61-63. **her fault and beauty . . . fouler :** see *Introduction*, p. 28. The image, characteristic as it is in its nature and occasion, is not original. Webster found it in Chapman's *A Great Man* :

"Th' embroidery  
Wrought on his state is like a  
leprosy,  
The whiter, still the fouler."

65. **I will instantly solicit . . . banish'd :** Painter says that the brothers used their influence to persuade Lord Gismondo Gonzago, the Cardinal of Mantua, then Legate for Pope Julius II at Ancona, to banish Antonio and the Duchess from that city.

67. **your ceremony :** in Painter's version of the story there is no reference to this ceremony, nor indeed to any part of the military business.

## SCENE IV

6. **Here the ceremony, etc.**: Webster had a partiality for stage spectacles. The ceremony of the Cardinal's *instalment* as a soldier in this scene of *The Duchess of Malfi* is paralleled by the solemn procession of the Ambassadors with other formalities of a pontifical installation in *The White Devil*, IV, iv.

The dumb-show of the sentence of banishment pronounced upon Antonio, the Duchess, and their children is also to be paralleled by a dumb-show in *The White Devil*, II, ii, where Brachiano witnesses at midnight the magical dumb-show that reveals the manner of his wife Isabella's death.

7-22. **arms and honours . . . showers**: in the Quarto of 1623, appears the following marginal note upon this song: "The Author disclaimes this Ditty to be his."

28. **to determine of**: i.e., "to set limits to the freedom of."

## SCENE V

33. **I stand engaged . . . trouble him**: cp. III, ii, 158, and note.

The passage shows that in the Duchess's description of Antonio's financial relations with Ferdinand and herself there was an element of truth considerable enough to justify her hope that the charges she brought against Antonio would completely hoodwink her brother as to her feeling for the accused.

47. **What of this**: sc. letter.

61. **curious**: "careful" or "skilful."

73. **man, like to cassia . . . bruis'd**: cp. *The White Devil*, I, i:

"Perfumes the more they are chaf'd, the more they render Their pleasing scents."

See also Bacon's *Essays, Of Adversity*.

86. **your kiss . . . skull**: cp. *Introduction*, p. 28.

116. **counterfeit face**: i.e., Bosola's mask or *vizard*.

123-137. **A salmon . . . fire**: this fable is hardly less undramatic than Ferdinand's: cp. III, ii, 113-126, and see *Introduction*, p. 29.

## ACT IV

## SCENE I

2-10. **nobly . . . spake**: see *Introduction*, p. 16.

35. **though our national law . . . equal**: the thought recurs in *The Devil's Law-Case*, IV, ii:

"For though our civil law makes difference 'Tween the base and the legitimate,

Compassionate nature makes them equal."

41. **too much i' the light**: "too conspicuous"; Bosola probably intends a glancing allusion to the other meaning of *light*, i.e., "wanton."

49. **ow'd**: "owned."

55. **Here is discovered . . . dead**: the traverse referred to in this stage direction was probably the

curtain that screened the 'tiring-room' from the stage. The counterfeit bodies, therefore, would be hanging in a somewhat darkened room.

62. **picture . . . dunghill**: an allusion to the malignant charm wrought by making a waxyen image of the intended victim, and pricking it with a needle. Sometimes to hasten the wasting effect of the charm, the image was then put before a fire (cp. Hardy's *Return of the Native*): the treatment Webster here mentions is to be paralleled in a passage of Chapman's *A Fragment*,—a passage that was possibly the "source" of Webster's inspiration:

"Like prick'd pictures charm'd  
And hid in dunghills."

71. **Portia . . . coals**: when Portia, the wife of Marcus Brutus, heard that her husband's cause was desparate, she committed suicide by swallowing live coals. Cp. *Julius Cæsar*, IV, iii, 154.

82. **a tedious theatre . . . will**: see *Introduction*, p. 16.

87. **to waste thy pity . . . itself**: see *Introduction*, p. 16.

91. **I would thou wert hang'd . . . given me**: see *Introduction*, p. 16.

127. **full o' the moon**: when according to popular notion their lunacy would be most extreme.

131. **intelligence**: i.e., playing the part of spy.

134. **thy pity . . . thee**: see *Introduction*, pp. 22, 26.

135. **Milan**: detail from Painter.

43. **imposthume**: "abscess."

50. **English tailor . . . fashions**: the "apishness" of the Elizabethan Englishman in following all sorts of foreign fashions at once was a common theme for contemporary satire; cp. *The Merchant of Venice*, I, ii, 70.

55. **excellent knave in grain**: there is a play upon the two senses of the phrase *in grain*: "in corn" and "dyed in grain."

56. **transportation**: "exportation."

74. **perspective**: "telescope," "wondrous glass."

77. **glass-house**: cp. note on II, ii, 7.

82. **woodcock**: supposed a brainless bird.

85. **turn'd Turk**: i.e., become infidel.

86. **Helvetian translation**: probably a reference to the English translation of the Bible, printed at Geneva in 1560. The phrase suggests that James's translation (1611) was much in men's mouths at the time the play was written. This would point to Webster having written the play in 1611 or early in 1612.

93. **my glass**: probably a "magic" glass.

103. **pared the devil's nails**: cp. *Twelfth Night*, IV, ii, 131.

118. **box of worm-seed . . . poison**: cp. *Introduction*, p. 11.

119. **salvatory**: "a box to preserve ointment in."

**mummy**: a drug supposed to have been made of man's flesh boiled in pitch, or to have been taken from old tombs, or to have been distilled from mummies. The drug gained its name from the prevalence of this last belief. Cp. Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial*, Chap. v: "Mummy is become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams."

## SCENE II

1. **consort**: "a company of musicians."

8. **my tragedy**: see *Introduction*, p. 27.

138. **glories, like glow-worms . . . light**: so verbatim in *The White Devil*, IV, i.

167. **the common bellman**: a fund was established in 1605 to provide that the bellman of St. Sepulchre's should deliver a solemn exhortation to every condemned prisoner in Newgate in the night before the execution. Cp. *Macbeth*, II, ii, 3: "The fatal bellman which gives the stern'st good-night."

173. **the whistler shrill**: cp. Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, II, xii, 36: "The whistler shrill that whoso heares doth dy."

175. **rent**: "revenue," "income."

193. **that noise**: probably Cariola; cp. the Duchess's next words.

227. **heaven-gates . . . princes' palaces**: appears to be a reminiscence of *Cymbeline* III, iii, 2:

"Stoop, boys: this gate  
Instructs you how to adore the  
heavens, and bows you  
To a morning's holy office: the  
gates of monarchs  
Are arch'd so high that giants  
may get through  
And keep their impious turbans  
on, without  
Good morrow to the sun."

239. **Come to my answer**: "stand trial," "demand a trial."

248. **when**: cp. note on II, i, 120.

258. **cover her face . . . young**: see *Introduction*, p. 31.

259. **her infelicity . . . her time to a minute**: Hazlitt finely says of this passage:

"This is not the bandying of idle words and rhetorical com-

monplaces, but the writhing and conflict and the sublime colloquy of man's nature with itself."

277. **only . . . confess**: "my one and only reason was, I must admit."

296. **complete**: the accent falls upon the first syllable: with this accentuation, cp. *Hamlet*, I, iv, 52:

"What may this mean  
That thou, dead corse, again in  
complete steel  
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of  
the moon?"

301. **office of justice . . . another**: so verbatim in *Appino and Virginia*, IV, i.

304. **wolf shall find . . . murder**: according to a popular superstition of the time, wolves are made the instruments of divine justice in that they dig up the bodies of men secretly murdered and buried, and leave enough of head and face exposed and unmutilated to make identification easy.

331. **painted honour**: i.e., his disguise.

336. **she stirs**: the Duchess's recovery of consciousness and of the power of speech was evidently suggested by Desdemona's recovery in *Othello*, V, ii, 122.

342. **pity would destroy pity**: i.e., his cry of pity would call in Ferdinand's servants who would complete his task by destroying the object of his pity.

348. **atonement**: "reconciliation." **Mercy!**: she is probably acknowledging the mercy of God.

353. **perspective**: cp. note on IV, ii, 74.

## ACT V

## SCENE I

6. **cheat**: "escheat": *in cheat* here means "in fee," "under the condition of feudal tenure."

69. **fraight**: "fraught."

72, 73. **it shall rid . . . falling**: the idea was suggested to Webster by the Counsel of Epicurus to Idomeneus quoted in Florio's *Montaigne*, I, xxxii:

"There is no man so base-minded that loveth not rather to fall once than ever to remaine in feare of falling."

## SCENE II

6. **lycanthropia**: Webster was undoubtedly acquainted with the description of this mental disease which is to be found both in Goullart's *Thresor d'Histoires admirables et memorables de nostre temps*, and in E. Grimeston's English translation of that work (see *Introduction*, p. 4). Dyce quotes the following from Goullart:

"Ceste Maladie est une espece de melancholie mais estrangement noire et vehemente. Car ceux qui en sont atteints sortent de leur maisons au mois de Fevrier, contrefont les loups presques en toute chose, et toute nuict ne font que courir par les coemiteries et autour des sepulchres . . . Un de ces melancholiques, Lycanthropes, que nous appellons Loups garoux . . . portoit lors surs ses epaules la cuisse entiere et la jambe d'un mort. . . . Il asseura fermement, qu'il estoit loup, et qu'il n'y auoit autre difference, sinon que les loups ordinairement estoient velus dehors, et lui estoit entre cuir et chair."

25. **Paracelsus**: the famous Swiss philosopher and physician of the sixteenth century who attempted to revolutionise the whole practice of medical science. For a short period he enjoyed a great reputation and lectured at Basel, but was soon discredited and had to live the rest of his life in vagabond obscurity.

35. **shadow . . . haunt me**: see *Introduction*, p. 10.

45. **studying . . . patience**: see *Introduction*, p. 10.

51. **sheep-biter**: "sheep-worrying dog," "back-biter."

70. **fetch a brisk**: "cut a caper."

75. **cullis**: see note on II, iv, 65.

77. **Barber-Chirurgeon's-hall**: in Monkwell Street.

86. **I must feign somewhat**: a simple, old-fashioned direction to the audience, as characteristic of Webster as it is inartistic and inappropriate.

158. **kill my longing**: Julia is evidently supposed to threaten Bosola here with a pistol. Cp. "I'll disarm you."

159. **Kissing-comfits**: i.e., perfumed sugar-plums, to sweeten the breath.

164. **compare . . . miracie**: Julia implies that she sees him with loving eyes and is therefore blind to his true form: hence her behaviour is not to be wondered at.

266. **seven year**: *year* here is an old neuter plural.

289. **I know not whither**: cp. Vittoria's dying words in *The White Devil*, V, vi:

"My soul, like to a ship in a black storm,  
Is driven, I know not whither."

## SCENE III

5. **echo** : see *Introduction*, p. 9.

## SCENE IV

35. **strangling . . . death** : Rupert Brooke's essay on *John Webster* contains the fine remark : "The mad Ferdinand, stealing across the stage in the dark, whispering to himself, with the devastating impersonality of the madman, 'Strangling is a very quiet death,' is a figure one may not forget."46. **could . . . pardon** : Antonio's hope is that if he can gain access to the cardinal when the latter is in a religious mood he may obtain pardon for his secret marriage.51. **A most wretched . . . myself** : Antonio probably believes that he has been struck down by the Cardinal. He had sought a *benefit* from him—his forgiveness for the secret marriage. All that he has gained by the issue is "to appear himself," "a most wretched thing," and this "benefit" he obtains from the other only at the point of death.57. **smother thy pity** : this is addressed to the servant to silence his outcry.67. **in sadness** : "in earnest," "in truth."75. **process** : "full account" or "planation."78. **let my son . . . princes** : see *Introduction*, p. 31.87. **direful misprision** : "terrible mistake," sc. in killing Antonio.

## SCENE V

1. **I am puzzled . . . me** : see *Introduction*, p. 29.22. **Enter, above Pescara, Mala-testi, etc.** : these characters in the Elizabethan playhouse appeared at this point above the stage upon the balcony.25. **Counterfeiting** : cp. V, iv, 15.55. **vaunt-guard** : "vanguard."56. **the honour of arms** i.e., a martial salute.62. **I suffer . . . sin** : cp. *The White Devil*, V, iii :" 'Twere fit you'd think on what hath former bin;  
I have heard grief nam'd the eldest child of sin."76. **vault credit** : "do incredible things."93. **main** : i.e., chief part.

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1. WEBSTER'S LIFE.

THE sinister dream of Webster's first great heroine, with its images of the yew-tree, the half-dug grave, the scattered bones, and the pair of diggers with their furious purpose, a dream of terror and horror, of darkness and lightning flashes, might be taken as a symbol of the dramatist's greatest achievements and of his artistic life.

Darkness still envelops all that part of John Webster's life which lay outside the composition of the three plays, *The White Devil*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, and *The Devil's Law Case*, which he himself published (the first in 1612 and the other two in 1623). Of the rest of his artistic career we really know little. It appears that he began his dramatic work at the end of Elizabeth's reign as a literary hack in the employment of Henslowe, the theatrical manager, and that in Henslowe's service he collaborated with Dekker, Heywood, and others in the production of three extant plays, *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyatt*,<sup>1</sup> the two citizen comedies, *Westward Ho!*<sup>2</sup> and *Northward Ho!*<sup>3</sup>, in addition to some other plays that have not survived.<sup>4</sup> His particular contribution to those three works of collaboration has been the subject of much study, but still remains uncertain. They are not plays of remarkable merit; one indeed, *The History of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, is the sort of stuff that the Greeks would have willingly let die. So far as they bear any individual stamp, it is not the stamp of Webster, but rather that of Dekker,

<sup>1</sup> Probably produced in 1602 under the title of *Lady Jane*: printed in 1607.

<sup>2</sup> Produced late in 1604 or early in 1605: printed in 1607.

<sup>3</sup> Probably produced in 1606: printed in 1607.

<sup>4</sup> *Caesar's Fall*; *Two Harpies* (?); *Christmas Comes but Once a Year*.

## INTRODUCTION

the facile, hearty champion of the City against the pretensions of the Court.

Amongst Webster's other literary labours must be reckoned a share in the composition of a lost tragedy, entitled *A Late Murther of the Sonne upon the Mother*,<sup>1</sup> a play in which Webster collaborated with the kindred genius of John Ford. Our dramatist was also the author of "The Induction" to Marston's play, *The Malcontent*,<sup>2</sup> of an extant city pageant (*Monuments of Honour*<sup>3</sup>), and of an elegy upon the death of Prince Henry (*A Monumental Column*<sup>4</sup>), a poem that contains some fine lines and images reminiscent of Donne and of *The Duchess of Malfi*.

Hardly anything beyond this is known of the external facts in the dramatist's life and artistic career. There is a late and questionable statement in Gildon's *Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets* (1698), to the effect that Webster was clerk of St. Andrew's, Holborn. Such a statement may seem to some the more reliable by reason of the dramatist's predilection for imagery drawn from the graveyard and the charnel-house. But we are on safer ground when we picture him as a friend and associate of the actors. And in his address "To the Reader" that prefaces his edition of *The White Devil*, we have the most positive evidence for considering him a conscientious artist who was ready to labour under the conditions and limitations of the popular theatre, not because he thought the popular drama the finest form of dramatic art, but because he knew it to be the only acceptable form,—a form, moreover, in which many of his fellow artists, Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Chapman, Dekker, and Heywood had wrought immortal masterpieces. His own preference in drama, if we may judge from that prefatory note to *The White Devil*, was for a dramatic form more markedly Senecan.

<sup>1</sup> Another lost play of Webster to which the dramatist refers in the Dedication of *The Devil's Law-Case* was called *Guise*.

Two other plays attributed at least in part to Webster, but perhaps falsely attributed to him, are *Appius & Virgilia* and *A Cure for a Cuckold*.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in 1604.

<sup>3</sup> Printed in 1624. On the title page of the original Quarto, Webster is described as "Merchant-Tailor," i.e. member of the Fraternity of Merchant Tailors.

<sup>4</sup> Printed in 1613.

with chorus and messenger and a weighty sententious style. At the same time it is plain enough that he was conscious of the merits of his own work. He was ready to be judged by the standard of the greatest contemporary achievements, and his confidence, at least in the case of his two great tragedies, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil*, is not misplaced. By his own confession, they were not rapid improvisations, but laboured and carefully polished pieces of work. Yet there is nothing formal or pedantic about them. On the contrary, they are works of profound imagination, subtle thought, and fiery energy. As for the third play published by the dramatist, the tragi-comedy of *The Devil's Law Case*, it must be admitted to be hardly comparable, for, though it has many fine things in it in the vein of the two great tragedies, as a work of art it is disappointing: its construction is clumsy, its moral tone ugly, and its imaginative energy fitful and uncertain.

In the darkness that envelops so much of the dramatist's career, those three plays stand out with the bold sinister outlines of the figures in Vittoria's dream. But for them Webster would have ranked among the minor Elizabethan dramatists. By reason of them, and especially by reason of *The White Devil* and his masterpiece, *The Duchess of Malfi*, he is to be accounted one of the greatest artists in the Elizabethan theatre, in subtlety of thought and reality of tragic passion second to none amongst his contemporaries save Shakespeare alone.

## 2. DATE OF COMPOSITION.

The date of the composition of *The Duchess of Malfi* is not definitely known, though it can be fixed approximately with some confidence. The play must have been produced before the death of the actor Ostler in 1614, for in the Quarto of the play published under Webster's direction in 1623, that actor is recorded as the first impersonator of the part of Antonio. That the play was written later than *The White Devil* is an inference to be drawn from the fact that it was not published by the dramatist along with

that play in 1612. Internal evidence, also, has been found for considering *The Duchess of Malfi* a later work than *The White Devil*. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, in *A Monumental Column* (1613), and in *The Devil's Law-Case* (written probably between 1620 and 1622) there are passages which must be regarded as literal borrowings from Sidney's *Arcadia*. No such borrowings can be traced in *The White Devil*. The natural inference is that Webster read *Arcadia* in the interval between the composition of *The White Devil* and the composition of *The Duchess of Malfi*. Now *The White Devil* was written between 1610 and 1612.

• The date of *The Duchess of Malfi* can, therefore, be approximately fixed as 1612–1614. As for the probable allusion to the Concini affair (see note, p. 141), that must have been inserted in a revision of the text in preparation for a revival of the play, in or shortly after 1617.

### 3. SOURCES.

✓ Like most of the other playwrights in the Elizabethan age, Webster, as it appears, did not invent the stories of his plays, but found them in existing plays, in popular tradition, or in prose narrative. *The Duchess of Malfi*, in so far as the main action is concerned, is a dramatized version of a story which Webster had read in the twenty-third novel of the second Tome of William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*.<sup>1</sup> That story is told by Painter as a warning to women against the cherishing of sensual desire. Remarking that he might have illustrated his text by the stories of many ancient heroines, he is content to "recyte

<sup>1</sup> The story had already been dramatised by Lope de Vega in a play produced before 1609; but there is nothing to suggest that Webster knew this Spanish play. The English dramatist may, however, have been acquainted with the short prose narrative versions of the story to be found in Beard's *The Theatre of God's Judgments* (1597), and in Goullart's *Histoires Admirables et Memorables de Nostre Temps* (1600), a book which appeared in an English translation in 1607, and which, whether in the French original or in the English translation, was almost certainly known to Webster (see note, p. 153). But neither Beard's nor Goullart's version could have added anything to Painter's much fuller narrative, and this last must, therefore, be regarded as Webster's main source.

a ryght pitifull History done almost in our tyme, when the French under leadings of that notable Capitayne Gaston de Foix, vanquished the force of Spayne and Naples at the Journey of Ravenna in the time of the French Kynge called Lewes the twelfth."

✓ Webster's method of construction was simple and old-fashioned. He was content to follow, without much rearrangement or compression, the course of Painter's narrative down to the death of the Duchess. His divergences from that narrative are for the most part inconsiderable and unimportant. On the other hand, his additions to the narrative, in respect both of plot and of characterization, are as significant as numerous. To Painter's story the dramatist added the brothers' definite injunctions to the Duchess against a second marriage, the whole of the part assigned to Bosola prior to his killing Antonio, the sudden visit of the Duke of Calabria to the Duchess's bedchamber, the spectacular "instalment" at Loretto, the whole of the subplot concerning Castruccio, Julia, and the Cardinal, and practically the whole of the Fourth and Fifth Acts—the incident of the dead hand, "the artificial figures of Antonio and his children appearing as if they were dead," the madmen with their song and dance, the episode of the tomb-maker and of the bellman, the "pestilent lycanthropia" of the Duke of Calabria, Antonio's visit to the Cardinal, the "echo" scene, the soldier scenes at Rome and Milan, the intrigues and counter-intrigues of Bosola and the Cardinal, Antonio's death by mistake, the deaths of Ferdinand, and the Cardinal and Bosola.

✓ Of these additions to the plot a few were contrived for spectacular effects, for stage shows and processions, of which Webster seems to have been fond. The great majority, however, are more strictly legitimate in a tragedy and were contrived to heighten the effect of pity and terror. ✓ It is the dramatist's deliberate aim to make the crimes seem blacker and more fearful, and the suffering more terrible and more pitiful. Such a purpose accounts for the increase in the number of deaths and crimes, for the introduction of terrible disease and Machiavellian villainy, and for the supernatural terrors of unearthly echoes, dark forebodings, and bloody omens. ✓

These additions to heighten the effect of pity and terror are not the full measure of the difference between Webster's tragedy and Painter's narrative. Perhaps the best mode of estimating that difference is to compare the dramatist's elaborate, highly finished character studies with the faint suggestions of them to be found in the novelist. Webster's *Duchess* is a new conception developed from a few hints in Painter's story; her graciousness and spirit and her passionate attachment to her second husband and their children are all that she has in common with the heroine whose condescension yields the motive for the novelist's homily. In like manner, the barest hints in Painter served to quicken the dramatist's creative imagination in the conception of Ferdinand and the Cardinal ✓ in Painter, all we learn is that Ferdinand is the more violent, the Cardinal the more dangerous, as "he grinds his teeth together." ✓ From the novelist, also, Webster gleaned the names of Antonio, Castruccio, Silvio and Bosola (a "bloody beast"): for nearly everything else in the characterisation the dramatist is solely responsible, unless he be indebted to suggestions found in his reading of two favourite works—the *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney and Florio's translation of *Montaigne* (see account of *characters*, pp. 15-16.) ✓

#### 4. WEBSTER AND THE "REVENGE" TRADITION

✓ *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, in motive and material, tone and spirit, and in matter, form, and style, are remarkably similar. ✓ It has already been pointed out that many of the most characteristic elements in the composition of the *Duchess* are Webster's own addition to the original story. Not less numerous nor less characteristic were his additions to the original history of Vittoria Accoramboni, "the White Devil." (The remarkable similarity, therefore, between the two plays is not to be regarded as the accidental result of the similarity of the original plots that Webster worked upon. On the contrary, this similarity must be regarded as the result of the deliberate additions which the dramatist made to those plots. ✓ It was he that created for both plays their peculiar

atmosphere of pitchy blackness relieved by intermittent flashes of illumination, he that inspired that sense of impending doom and inevitable retribution for sin and crime, and he that gave to both their bitter flavour of caustic satire, biting scorn, and ugly cynicism.

Many of his additions would not have appeared as new kinds of dramatic motive and material to the dramatist's audiences. They had already supped full of horrors and felt the lash of the satire of Marston, Tourneur, and other dramatists. In these two plays, Webster had fashioned nothing novel, nothing strange! In their composition he was accepting and practising a popular contemporary form.

It is customary to speak of these two great plays as plays of the "revenge" tradition. This type, established in the Latin plays which pass under the name of Seneca, was introduced into the popular Elizabethan theatre by Kyd in his *Spanish Tragedy*. After Kyd the type can be traced in a number of plays, e.g. in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* and his *Malcontent*, Tourneur's *Revenger's Tragedy*, and Webster's tragic masterpieces. The type is named from the mainspring of the action—revenge, a motive often conceived in the Senecan spirit, not as at the best a wild kind of justice, but as a sacred and solemn duty which may not be neglected. Other common features of the type from Kyd onwards are a predilection for supernatural terrors, violent imagery, and deeds of beastlike cruelty and horror. But these characteristics are to be found in many Elizabethan tragedies that are profoundly different from Webster's masterpieces. These latter bear a much closer resemblance to the plays of Marston and Tourneur than to those of the other dramatists of the school—a resemblance due not so much to their "revenge" motive as to their common observance of Othello's words, as a grave artistic admonishment: "On horror's head horrors accumulate"; and, above all, to their common partiality for a rascally servant of the Machiavellian villain of the piece, a rogue usually known as the "Malcontent," who intersperses his bloody business with meditations that range from the solemn seriousness of Ecclesiastes to the filthy merriment of the gutter. For the inventor of this particular combination

of satiric meditation and horrors, both physical and mental, we must look to the earliest of the group, to Marston, whose tragi-comedy *The Malcontent* established both the type and the name. That play was written between 1600 and 1604, that is, at least six, and probably nearer ten years, before Webster's first "revenge" tragedy, *The White Devil*.

As a matter of fact, Webster's two tragedies must have appeared like belated members of the school. Audiences were already losing their taste for this sombre railing tragedy and were developing an appetite for the strangely varied dish of Fletcherian tragi-comedy. Happily for Webster's literary fame, if not for his private pocket, he was always in the rear of artistic movements, despite his keen interest in, and study of, contemporary drama. Hence the Fletcherian disease did not attack his art until long after he had delivered himself of these two masterpieces of tragic gloom. A scrupulous, painstaking artist, he has in them refined the material and motives of the earlier tragedies of blood and gloom and wrought all that he took into something much richer, much more subtly wonderful. He has, in a word, converted melodrama into tragedy.

That the end of the "revenge" convention is in sight is plain enough, even in the case of *The White Devil*, where the traditional motive is conceived in its most conservative form as the exacting of blood for blood. For the dramatist's sense of truth and right and his sympathy for humanity, even in the presence of sin and crime, is too strong to allow him to vamp once more the conventional motive of the sanctity of revenge. *The Duchess of Malfi* admits of no such division of moral sympathy as may exist in the case of *The White Devil*. In the later tragedy, revenge is seen in its ugliest form: there can be no exculpation, no excuse. The revengeful brothers are both villains who carry their villainy to the farthest verge of human depravity. They are the victims of an insensate fury that blinds the eyes, maddens the brain, and poisons the springs of pity, a fury that, in the more violent choleric temper of Ferdinand, leads to a maddening remorse, and, in the more studiedly treacherous soul of the Cardinal, to a callousness and inhumanity that strikes one cold. The piteous

sufferings of their victim evoked a passionate sympathy even from the hard heart of a Bosola.

" You may discern the shape of loveliness  
More perfect in her tears than in her smiles."

Heinous guilt would not have justified such torture. The brothers' resentment and disappointment at their sister's secret marriage may be natural, but in its effect it goads them to an unnatural rage beyond all reason and humanity. Hence their deeds of revenge are not a wild kind of justice, but an inexplicable and monstrous wrong.✓

✓ Webster's treatment of the supernatural, especially in the case of the Duchess of Malfi, is not less characteristic for its imaginative freedom than is his handling of the traditional motive of "revenge." In *The Duchess of Malfi* there are none of the ghosts and objective portents so conventional in the "revenge" plays. Indeed, there is nothing strictly supernatural to which objection can be raised, except the foreboding voice of the Echo with its despondent answers to Antonio's words. For the rest, the supernatural element in the play is limited to the discriminating use of omens and presentiments. These are quiet and subdued and make their effect, not directly by a sudden shock of surprise, but deviously by creating an atmosphere of gloom and impending calamity. Their effect, therefore, is not so much sudden as cumulative. Detail after detail bears its ominous comment on the trend of fortune and thus serves to create an ever-deepening impression of tragic issues and inevitable doom.

✓ Artistic atmosphere is with Webster a matter of deep concern. He may be careless about some things, but he is scrupulous and careful about that. In *The Duchess of Malfi* the full atmospheric significance is extracted both from the supernatural and from the abnormal. Scenes of madness had been common enough in the Elizabethan drama, but hitherto their interest had been usually episodic and not psychological. The masque of madmen (IV, ii) is contrived in the spirit of that earlier practice: its effect is largely that of grotesque and ridiculous antics and dialogue, but it contains besides an element of ghastly horror, for it must be considered not only in its own

## INTRODUCTION

intrinsic nature, but also in its reaction upon the tortured heroine whose sanity is so perilously dependent upon its wild distractions as an escape from the maddening frenzy of silent thought. More characteristic of Webster, however, is the subtle study of Ferdinand's lycanthropia. This is conceived, not as a mere episode of wild terror and horror, but as a lapse from mental balance that becomes rapidly more and more perceptible. In this, as in his other finer studies of insanity, Webster kept before his mind's eye Shakespeare's delineation of madness—especially that of King Lear. Ferdinand's shadow is a sycophant that haunts him still; like Lear, he thinks of bribes and corruption; like Lear, he has a confused recollection of his vain attempts to be patient, and is still studying that art; like Lear, too, he raves at "flattery and lechery." At the last, like Lear and the "distracted" Brachiano in *The White Devil*, Ferdinand recovers for a moment much of his former self: his old arrogance reasserts itself, when, poor broken-winded beast that he is, he proclaims his resolution to affect high pleasures after death.

Only the greatest of the world's dramatists have succeeded in making physical violence subserve the ends of dramatic atmosphere. Most of the so-called "revenge" dramatists had found it easy enough to be revolting, and some had been at pains to exceed all bounds in repulsiveness. Webster set himself the infinitely harder task of impressing violence into the service of poetry. His finest use of physical horrors is undoubtedly to be found in the Fourth Act of *The Duchess of Malfi*. Of that use of the horrible in order to react through the physical upon the spiritual and so to produce in the reader the terrible impression of a soul in bale, no one has written so eloquently as Charles Lamb in his "Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets":

"All the several parts of the dreadful apparatus with which the duchess's death is ushered in are not more remote from the conceptions of ordinary vengeance than the strange character of suffering which they seem to bring upon their victim is beyond the imagination of ordinary poets. As they are not like inflictions of *this life*, so her anguish seems *not of this world*. She has lived among

horrors till she is become ' native and endowed unto that element.' She speaks the dialect of despair, her tongue has a snatch of Tartarus and the souls in bale. What are ' Luke's iron crown,' the brazen bull of Perillus, Procrustes' bed, to the waxen images which counterfeit death, to the wild masque of madmen, the tomb-maker, the bell-man, the living person's dirge, the mortification by degrees ! To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit ; this only a Webster can do. Writers of an inferior genius may ' upon horror's head horrors accumulate,' but they cannot do this. They mistake quantity for quality, they ' terrify babes with painted devils,' but they know not how a soul is capable of being moved ; their terrors want dignity, their affrightments are without decorum."

But a sounder critical judgment upon that Act was pronounced by Lamb's friend Hazlitt, who deprecated the introduction of the scene of the madhouse and of the interview between the Duchess and her brother, " where he gives her the supposed dead hand of her husband." The situation is already distracting and painful enough without the additional distractions of the madmen's dismal music and their wild ravings. Indeed, what is most moving in that Act is not the disclosure to the Duchess of the ghastly but well-nigh ridiculous counterfeit shapes of her husband and her children, nor all the apparatus of death, nor even the sinister and terrible fantasies of tomb-maker and bellman, but the flashes of tenderness and dignity that break from the tortured victim.

One powerful factor in the production of the total impression of that wonderful Act is the wide range of Bosola's subtle thought :

" Thou art a box of worm-seed, at best but a salutary of green mummy. What's this flesh ? a little cruddled milk, fantastical puff-paste. Our bodies are weaker than those paper prisons boys use to keep flies in ; more contemptible, since ours is to preserve earth-worms. Didst thou ever see a lark in a cage ? Such is the soul in the body, this world is like her little turf of grass, and the heavens o'er our heads like her looking-glass, only gives

us a miserable knowledge of the small compass of our prison."

✓ The rôle of Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi* is very like that of Flamineo in *The White Devil*. Both are obviously conceived as malcontent meditators of the type invented by Marston in *The Malcontent*. The meditations of both are largely traditional malcontent meditations upon the vanity and corruption of the world. But Webster's malcontents no longer affect a hypocritical air of outraged piety. What distinguishes Bosola from his fellows is his deeper sense of the mystery and pathos of life, its ironies and paradoxes, and its tragic absurdity. ✓

✓ In nothing else is Webster's superiority to the earlier dramatists of the "revenge" school more pronounced than in the clarity of his moral vision in his two tragedies of that type. His characters are often cynical and pessimistic, but his own eyes are never blind to moral truth. He may be sad and sceptical, often seemingly pessimistic and cynical, but in his two great tragedies at least, while he does not stoop to enforce a puerile poetic justice, he is equally free from any desire to affront our moral sense by sympathy for sin and crime. His heart is loyal to the truth of things. Hence, for all the terrible gloom, his voice is audible in Bosola's cry that "the stars shine still." ✓

## 5 CONSTRUCTION

✓ Webster's handling of the plot is in many respects characteristic. As a piece of stagecraft it has many arresting situations and moments. The whole of Act IV might be regarded as a theatrical *tour de force*. Not less wonderful is the management of the secret spousals with the sudden appearance of Cariola as witness to the marriage *per verba de presenti*. The same "sense of the theatre" is revealed at many other points. The meeting of Antonio and Bosola in the courtyard of the palace on the night of the first child's birth reminds one of the courtyard scene in *Macbeth* (II, i) with its sense of mystery, suspicion, and

blanching fear. Not less effective theatrically is Ferdinand's violent appearance at the Cardinal's palace with Bosola's letter of intelligence, nor is that frenzied appearance less sound in psychological conception than in theatrical effect. There are other entries of Ferdinand that are managed with similar or even with greater skill.

✓ That in the bedchamber scene (III, ii) is a masterly piece of stagecraft: there is nothing more tremendous in the play than the moment when the Duchess, in her surprise at the continued silence of her husband, whose return she had assumed on hearing the quiet tread behind her, turns about only to discover that the intruder is not her husband, but her brother, whose hand is already stealing to his poniard, as if to strike without a word. Another wonderful entry of Ferdinand is that in which the lycanthrope steals upon the stage, muttering, "Strangling is a very quiet death." (See note on V. iv, 35, p. 154).

These and many other situations prove beyond doubt that Webster had an eye extraordinarily quick in seizing the right moment, the "dramatic" moment; but with him this gift was unaccompanied by constructive skill,—by the power of recasting and remodelling a story to suit the exigencies of the theatre. None of Webster's plays can be considered as masterpieces of construction. In the two great tragedies the dramatist followed in the main the traditional method of dramatising a narrative scene by scene without much rearrangement of detail or concentration of interest (cp. p. 5). Down to the death of the Duchess, the dramatist's version contains only one important divergence from the original narrative in Painter, and that divergence involved him in difficulties which he left unsettled.

In Painter's narrative, the birth of the first child is said to have escaped detection, and it is not until the birth of the second that suspicions are aroused and rumours reach the Duchess's two brothers in Rome. Then they immediately take action, sending "espials round about" to discover the father. Thereupon, Antonio, fearing their vengeance, retires to Ancona. In Webster's version, Bosola's suspicions are aroused before the birth of the first child, and by securing its horoscope, which Antonio accidentally drops, the spy obtains conclusive evidence of

that birth. It is not a little strange that Antonio seems never to attempt to recover the horoscope, nor even to miss it. But even stranger is the inaction of the Duchess's brothers at the end of Act II. Both are depicted as furious at the news which Bosola has sent, and yet they are inactive so long that when at last Ferdinand does appear at the Duchess's palace she has borne Antonio two more children.

The question naturally arises as to why the dramatist allowed the long delay. No explanation is entirely satisfactory. It is quite inconsistent with the fury of the two brothers at the end of Act II, and is quite untrue to the spirit of the original, where the brothers act promptly enough when their suspicions have been aroused.

The most probable explanation of the confusion to be found in Webster's version is that it was occasioned by an ill-considered change of plan. It is unlikely that the dramatist's original plans required or permitted the long inaction at the end of Act II. Indeed, in antedating the brothers' initial discovery he would appear to have been actuated by a desire for greater compression than Painter's version allowed. No doubt he saw that the original narrative presented only two phases of great dramatic interest—the secret marriage and the discovery of the marriage with the consequent violence of the offended brothers. He must have felt the need to shorten as much as possible the interval between these two phases. Such a purpose of compression and concentration must be the explanation of his antedating the first "intelligence" to the brothers.

When, however, he had so far expedited the development of his story, he was confronted with a problem. If the brothers were to be represented as acting immediately upon the reception of the news in Bosola's report, he must forego the horror of the death of the two younger children mentioned by Painter. This he was loth to do, not only because he wished to reach the uttermost point of terror and horror, but also because he saw that the monstrousness of the deed would serve to emphasize Ferdinand's insensate frenzy and Bosola's beast-like instinct for blood. For these reasons, therefore, he was obliged to modify his earlier plans or else to recast his first draft of Act III,

Scene i,<sup>1</sup> in order to make possible that slaughter of the innocent in Act IV.

The delay at the end of Act II is explicable only by some such change of plan. There can be no question that the delay is a serious flaw in the general design—a flaw that must be ascribed to negligence or to lack of constructive skill. Neither of these explanations is sufficient to account for what appears to many eyes a much more serious error. Both in the study and in the theatre, Act V is apt to appear something of an anti-climax; the tragic story is complete with the death of the Duchess, and what follows, therefore, is apt to appear at times but a superfluity of horrors. The risk of such an anti-climax must have been foreseen by an artist so careful as Webster. Nonetheless, he was ready to take the risk, and this, because his artistic purpose was as much ethical and moral as dramatic. Act V is to be regarded as an extreme instance of his preoccupation with problems of conduct and society. He is a moralist who does not hesitate to sacrifice something of his dramatic art to the achievement of his moral purpose. He must pursue to the end his theme of sin and retribution. He must heighten by every possible means the impression he wishes to convey of the evil and corruption of courts and palaces. His supreme end appears to be the vindication of moral truth. No wonder that Swinburne in a moment of enthusiasm wrote, "There is no poet morally nobler than Webster."

## 6. CHARACTERIZATION

### [THE DUCHESS OF MALFI]

In developing the character of the Duchess and in delineating her sufferings, Webster, as has already been pointed out (see p. 6), owed little to Painter, but found inspiration in the nobler writing of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. Four characters of that book, in their imprison-

<sup>1</sup> The last three lines of Act II, Scene V, may be regarded as another addition for the same purpose.

ment (viz., Queen Erona, the princesses Pamela and Philoclea, and the hero Pyrocles, who appears in the disguise of the "Amazon Zelmane"), all served as models for the situation and sufferings of the unhappy Duchess.

Queen Erona, who, like Webster's heroine, had married beneath her, is described by Sidney in her imprisonment as "Sad indeed, yet like one rather used than new fallen to sadness (as one who had the joys of her heart already broken seemed rather to welcome than to shun that end of misery)." . . . In her sorrow, says Sidney, one could "perceive the shape of loveliness more perfectly in woe than in joyfulness." . . . "She, as if he had spoken of a small matter when he mentioned her life, to which she had not leisure to attend, desired him, if he loved her, to show it in finding some way to save Antiphilus. For her she found the world but a wearisome stage unto her where she played a part against her will, and therefore besought him not to cast his love in so unfruitful a place as could not love itself"; . . . (On the death of Antiphilus) "glorying in affliction and shunning all comfort, she seemed to have no delight, but in making herself the picture of misery." (Cp. IV, i, 3-8, and IV, ii, 30-34.)

In the case of the other three, Webster's indebtedness is mainly in the matter of their tortures. The scene in which Ferdinand gives the dead man's hand to the Duchess, and then has revealed the supposed bodies of Antonio and his children behind a curtain, is closely associated with the incident of the supposed decapitation of Philoclea (Bk. III). Ferdinand plays the part of Sidney's Cecropia, and the horror of the Duchess parallels the anguish of the two spectators, Pamela and Pyrocles (the Amazon Zelmane). Pamela, like Webster's heroine, resolves to starve herself (cp. IV, i, 75). The disguised hero also provides a parallel with the Duchess:—"It happened at that time upon his bed toward the dawning of the day, he heard one stir in his chamber, by the motion of the garments, and with an angry voice asked, who was there. 'A poor gentleman,' answered the party, 'that wishes long life unto you.' 'And I soon death to you,' said he, 'for the horrible curse you have given me.'" (Cp. IV, i, 90-92).

With these Sidneian examples of passive endurance Webster undoubtedly associated that of Shakespeare's

Desdemona, whose last cry obviously suggested the Duchess's momentary recovery and her last word.

That resemblance between Desdemona and the Duchess might be taken as a means of estimating the achievements of the two dramatists : such comparison will bring out the beauty of Webster's conception and at the same time reveal the more wonderful powers of the greater dramatist. The Duchess has many lovely and noble qualities, but she is less clearly and completely apprehended by her creator ; she has not Desdemona's individual distinction of characteristic life. Webster's conception is, nonetheless, very wonderful and very beautiful, and this, not least in those parts of the play where he was most dependent upon his own invention. Thus the dramatist is most happy in his delineation of the Duchess's dangerous venture to choose a husband. At once she reveals her courage and dignity and the passionate sweetness of her disposition, and the great charm inherent in these qualities is enhanced by her delicate humour and ironical self-depreciation in the very moment of her loving declaration :—

“ Go, go brag  
 You have left me heartless ; mine is in your bosom ;  
 I hope 'twill multiply love there. You do tremble :  
 Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh,  
 To fear more than to love me. Sir, be confident :  
 What is 't distracts you ? This is flesh and blood, sir ;  
 'T is not the figure cut in alabaster  
 Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man !  
 I do here put off all vain ceremony,  
 And only do appear to you a young widow  
 That claims you for her husband, and, like a widow,  
 I use but half a blush in 't.”

That her choice has lighted upon Antonio is the surest indication we have of his worth ; for it is plain that she is careful to preserve her own sense of her honour and that of her family (III, i, 48). It is perhaps surprising that with her high sense of honour she should have been a party to prolonged secrecy in the matter of her marriage ; and if we may judge from her own words (III, ii, 56, 57), the preservation of the secret would seem to have been due to the influence of her husband rather than to her own wish.

Her sweetness and simple grace have never appeared

more winsome than at the moment of her brother's stealthy entry (III, ii, 52), and her bearing upon the discovery of his presence immediately makes plain that she is not less grand and heroic than sweet and lovable. Indeed, her nature seems to give forth most fragrance when it is bruised. In the hour of danger, it is she upon whose wit and resolution her husband and their children are dependent for their safety. Nor is this revelation of strength attended by any diminution of her natural sweetness. Her secret is betrayed by her love, not by her fear. The "most excellent music" of Bosola's praise of her husband is so potent with her as to elicit the information which danger could not wrest.

Henceforth her story is one of simple charm, of passionate tenderness, and of heroic fortitude. When with Antonio and their children she wends her way into banishment from Ancona, she envies the birds their happiness in the free enjoyment of their loves. Yet, even in this mood of simple sorrow, her intelligence does not desert her. On the contrary, under the stimulus of her almost maternal solicitude for her husband, it is particularly keen to detect beneath the politic equivocation of her brother's letter his intended treachery. Her natural instinct to save her husband and her children permits no thought of herself and inspires her heartbroken suggestion that they should part:—

"Farewell, boy:  
Thou art happy that thou hast not understanding  
To know thy misery; for all our wit  
And reading brings us to a truer sense  
Of sorrow.—In the eternal church, sir,  
I do hope we shall not part thus."

After that parting she is so distraught with grief and rage and despair that at length her mind seems to give way under the load of suffering and she babbles fondly some old wives' tale of the vanity of the dog-fish and the salmon (III, v, 123-137).

The horrible tortures, however, inflicted by her brothers, serve but to save her mind already half-crazed with grief. Each new horror seems but to strengthen the resistance of her anguished soul. Even when life has truly become for her the most horrible curse that one can give, her

spirit remains unconquered and unbroken. "I am Duchess of Malfi still."

In the presence of death itself, her strength of spirit might seem superhuman and unnatural but for the exquisite tenderness with which it is combined (see p. 105). Her tone to her executioners is that of fearless command. She has not a tremble for their instruments of torture. Indeed, her spirit is so triumphant that she can find a moment for characteristic self-depreciation. In the very moment of her horrible death, she stays the hands of her executioners that she may bow her knees before the gates of heaven, and her last cry is a prayer of thanksgiving for the mercy of God (see note on IV, ii, 350.)

#### [ANTONIO]

The character of Antonio was largely determined by the exigencies of the story. If the play was not to be repulsive, the steward must not be unattractive. If, on the other hand, it was to follow the original story of intrigue and counter-intrigue, then, of necessity, he must not be bold or venturesome and must naturally assume throughout his relations with the Duchess a subordinate position. The conditions of the original story demanded passivity rather than activity from Antonio, and these conditions the dramatist, in his delineation of the character, was careful to observe, even at the risk of depicting the steward as somewhat unheroic.

Antonio is conceived as a man of considerable worth and acumen. Indeed, Webster has endowed him with so much of his own insight as to make him a suitable mouthpiece for the delivery of his own judgments and opinions to his audience. Thus, in Antonio's admiration for the French court and its "most provident council," the dramatist is expressing, without loss of dramatic illusion, his own political sympathies and hinting at the fundamental weakness in the autocratic system favoured by the first of the Stuarts. Nor is Antonio a less reliable guide to the author's view of Ferdinand and the Cardinal, and their tool, Bosola. Of the last, he may not speak the whole truth (I, i, 22-28); but his words contain much of the truth. And his understanding of the Duchess's brothers

is even more certain and more complete. He reads the strange silence and passivity of the Duke of Calabria (III, i, 19) with unerring eyes. He may be deemed to commit an error of judgment in his decision to appeal to the Cardinal (V, i, 62-74), but at least his error is not due to lack of insight. He may be cherishing a fond hope; but his boldness is to be accounted not so much the rashness of blind optimism as the courage of despair.

Naturally honest, Antonio does not take easily to intrigue. He is no match for the craft of Bosola, and without Delio's suggestions and encouragement must have been at the mercy of the spy (II, i, 161-174). His failure to recover or even to attempt to recover the child's horoscope which he drops in the courtyard must be accounted an extraordinary instance of his natural simplicity and negligence, if it is not to be accounted rather as an inexplicable oversight in the dramatist's craftsmanship (see p. 14). When he acts the rôle of the maligned steward (III, ii, 184-198), it is not craft nor a talent for acting, but his natural honesty which makes him appear convincing.

By temperament, he is a man of thought rather than of action, and the circumstances of his life have but strengthened his natural bias. He has had ample opportunities for observation, few for decisive action. He has been dependent upon the will of others and is naturally diffident in his own affairs. He loves his mistress devotedly, but he is too modest to have ever made Malvolio's mistake. He knows his place and has schooled himself into silent love and service. It is plain that he has forced himself to think of the possibility of his mistress's marrying again, and even urges her to do so, when he has no hope that he will be the husband of her choice. When at length her purpose is made clear, he is overwhelmed by her noble condescension. Not even her gentle ironic, self-depreciation can make him forget for a moment their difference of rank, and his courage is no match for hers.

#### [FERNAND]

The dramatist was particularly anxious to guard against any misconceptions as to the character of Ferdinand. Before Antonio has any personal cause for hostility, he

is quick to condemn the Duke as "a most perverse and turbulent nature," a creature of hollow mirth and ugly cynicism, implacable in his private hates and dishonest and treacherous in his public duties.

That Antonio's condemnation is not without justice is evident at the first appearance of the Duke. For he at once betrays the hollowness of his mirth, in that he will not tolerate laughter in his sycophant followers, unless it is sanctioned by his own example. A little later in the same Scene, his natural instinct for craft and treacherous dealing becomes equally manifest. He cannot depart from Malfi without leaving a spy in his sister's service. That he should press upon his brother's notice the claims of Antonio for the secret office is proof, not of his superior morality, but of his inferior judgment. On this account, he is less formidable than the Cardinal; but his wide experience in unscrupulous dealing makes him a dangerous adversary. Out of that experience he can counsel even such a rogue as Bosola in the ways of craft.

What his objection is to his sister's marrying again is not particularly clear. It is true that later he confesses to having been encouraged by the avaricious hope of inheriting great wealth; but he must have foreseen that that wealth would probably descend or be bequeathed to the Duchess's son by her first marriage (cp. III, iii, 68).

Quite possibly the reason for his objection is none too clear even in his own mind. The very ungenerousness of such objection would be enough in itself to recommend it to the natural malevolence of both brothers. In pressing the objection upon his sister's attention, Ferdinand urges considerations that are obviously hypocritical and not even reasonable or consistent. He represents himself as concerned for his sister's good name and as afraid of the poisonous tattle of her court. But such considerations would have little significance in the event of her openly contracting a marriage, and he has no particular reason to fear a secret union, unless perhaps he feels that her knowledge of his objection to a second marriage under any circumstances may incite her to such a union.

Bosola's letter announcing the birth of the Duchess's child at once reveals the Duke's turbulent nature. It seems 'to have put him out of his wits.' In wild frenzy

he rushes off to his brother's palace to relate the intelligence he has received. So frenzied is he that his brother, despite his own black resentment, loses all patience and condemns his mad violence with cold scorn (II, v, 64).

In the furious colloquy between them, a tendency to a beastlike madness is plainly to be seen in the Duke's turbulent spirit; and henceforth the dramatist is careful to trace the insidious advance of his mental disease. At first the malady does not grow apace. When at length he reappears at Malfi (III, i, 51-55) he has regained sufficient self-possession to dissimulate with success. In this mood he is proof against Bosola's suggestion that the Duchess has been the victim of witchcraft; and indeed his new sense of power and of mental clearness won through the mastery of his passion fills him with so much confidence that he is tempted through mere pride of strength to become his own chronicler, as Bosola rebukingly advises him. ■

His self-mastery is sorely tried when he steals into the Duchess's bedroom, and he is hard put to it to check his mad passion. No sooner does he quit her presence than he is carried away "in a whirlwind" (III, ii, 151).

At the news that the Duchess's secret husband is her steward Antonio, the Duke's passionate temper is provoked for the moment to wild laughter; but he quickly recovers himself, though his suppressed rage has to find a vent in expressions of unjust contempt for Antonio (III, iii, 71). Henceforth, his mad devilry is steadily to become more and more marked. It is palpably evident in the over-reaching cunning of the letter which he sends to the fugitives by Bosola. It is even more manifest in his horrible fantasy of the gift of the dead man's hand, a fantasy so dreadful that it would be dramatically inexcusable were it not the work of half-mad devilry. Had he been saner than he is, he might have foreseen that the natural reaction of the madmen's frantic gestures upon the Duchess's mind would tend not to the wrecking but to the preserving of her imperiled reason. Nor is his discovery as to the nature of Bosola's pity (IV, i, 134) to be regarded as the normal deduction of clear observation and sound sense, but a sudden revelation of profound truth that flashes across the gathering darkness of his mental world.

At the disclosure of the bodies of his strangled sister and her children (IV, ii, 256), he attempts to defy his fate in his fixed gaze upon the dead. But he soon falters in his purpose. For a moment he reviews the whole career of his mad rage in its true light, and is forced to admit that he had had but one explicable reason for his course—the hope that he might inherit great treasure at his sister's death, if she could be forced to remain a widow. But, even in this remorseful moment, the Machiavellian practices of a lifetime assert themselves. The murder of the murderous tool was a course constantly practised by Machiavelli's disciples, and Ferdinand now bethinks himself of the wisdom of following the traditional course; but he dare not do so. Baffled by Bosola, his fury blazes forth again in language that makes plain that the hour of retribution has indeed struck (IV, ii, 231).

The delineation of Ferdinand's lycanthropia is not unworthy of Shakespeare himself, whose art Webster is here imitating (see p. 10). His mind is devastated, but the old landmarks are still clearly visible. No mocking mask any longer hides his inner devilry. Now that he has "lost his wits," his nature is at last disclosed in all its true repulsiveness. Freed from all intellectual restraints, his malevolent, arrogant, deadly spirit speeds on its course with but redoubled fury, and in the very moment of annihilation is most itself.

### [THE CARDINAL]

The Cardinal is conceived as a worldly prelate of the sinister type so familiar in the age of the Borgias. Popular report endows him with high spirits, personal courage and gallantry, and a reckless passion for gambling. His more intimate acquaintances know him for a dark intriguer who maintains a veritable army of spies and treacherous tools.

He has all the besetting sins of the Machiavellian villain. He is cold, calculating, and treacherous, inordinately ambitious and factious (III, iii, 35), pitiless in his hate, secretive in his lust and in his villainy, and as incredulous of loyalty in others as he is faithless himself (V, ii, 250). He would seem to regard gratitude as a weakness, and is

careful to disappoint his tool of all reward, and, if possible, to be rid of him when once he has gained knowledge of dangerous secrets in his criminal service.

Webster has not been content, however, to make a mere copy of the traditional Machiavellian. He is clearly and boldly distinguished from his brother by his superior judgment of men (cp. p. 21), and by his colder and more ruthless pursuit of his purpose. This calculating coldness marks his reception of Bosola's news concerning the birth of the Duchess's child. His terrible force for evil is made manifest in his self-possession: his fury seems but to intensify his critical coolness of temper. The contempt that he expresses for his brother's mad rage (III, v, 55) is still traceable in the cold accents in which he commands that the wretched lycanthrope be 'forced up' from the ground, where he has been attacking his own shadow (V, ii, 52). In his bearing on that occasion, there is no certain sign of pity or compunction.

It is hardly worthy of the Cardinal that even in the dead of night he should proclaim his murderous purpose. That he does so is to be accounted not so much a weakness of character as evidence of the dramatist's lack of constructive skill (V, iv, 32).

Webster makes amends in the next scene, wherein he depicts the movements of the Cardinal's guilty conscience (cp. p. 29). The prelate's cynical audacity deserts him, when Bosola proclaims his revengeful purpose. Unlike most of Webster's other characters, he falters in spirit at the threat of death and appeals to his assailant for mercy. But, when he has already received a fatal wound, something of his old mocking spirit returns: he can taunt Bosola and pray to be himself "laid aside and never thought of." Indeed nothing in his life becomes him so much as the leaving it; then and then only does he reveal a trace of unselfishness: "Look to my brother" (V, v, 95).

[BOSOLA]

In his delineation of Bosola's character the dramatist was confronted with a certain traditional difficulty. If the character was to be convincing, its two distinct rôles as malcontent meditator and tool of the villainous Arragon

brethren must be completely fused. In general it may be said that this fusion has been achieved ; but the dramatist's conception is not quite flawless. There are occasions when the malcontent's meditations do not have the note of sincerity and spontaneity, but appear, on the contrary, to be delivered with something of the professional pose, the professional vanity, that marks the utterances of the earlier characters of the type (e.g. Marston's Malevole). Thus Bosola must have an attentive and respectful audience (II, i, 50) when he proceeds to deliver his little metrical satire on human vanity, a passage of which he is obviously proud, and which he has been at pains to memorise.

For the most part, however, Bosola is not to be regarded as a mere cynic by profession. His cynicism is a natural part of himself. The natural bent of his mind is to satire, and his experience has heightened and embittered his natural propensity. He is a disappointed man with a grievance against himself and the world. It has been his misfortune, he feels, to have been "an actor in the main of all, much against his own good nature, yet in the end neglected." He has sold his soul for place and fortune and has gained only a long term in the galleys. He is certainly not without ambition, and in his bitterness his only motives for action are considerations of personal aggrandisement and desire for power. In the world of practical life, he wilfully disregards conscientious scruples, but he is not altogether without them. On the contrary, he contrives to discharge upon the world, in the form of indignation at its abuses and corruptions, something of his deeper dissatisfaction with himself and his conduct, and something of the irritability and discontent which he feels at the meagre measure of worldly success gained by those moral sacrifices. Thus his conscience has come to be for him little more than a mental luxury of irritable reflection. His intellectual freedom, the only freedom left to him, fills him with a sense of bitter pleasure. He loves to brood upon the hollowness of the world as a means of venting the bitterness of his own disappointed lust and pride, his own malice and envy, and unappeased ambition (I, i, 22-27).

His cynicism and "melancholy" are congenial weapons

by being made expressive of the Duchess's self-conscious glorying in sorrow. Webster's motive in the selection of language and imagery is, like Marston's and Tourneur's, to awaken terror and awe; but, while his motive is the same, his method is different. They, for the most part, get their terrible effects by ruthless directness and by brief simile and metaphor: Webster, on the other hand, works principally through the imagination. His favourite method is by quaint arresting similes of an unusual kind, similes of subtle illustrative power, which yield up their wealth of meaning only after deliberation and thought, and which have a significance for spirit and atmosphere far beyond their particular application. Mournful, uncanny, and mysterious, they distil their essence through the play and so combine with the supernatural elements of omens and presentiments, and with the abnormal mental condition of insanity, to create the peculiar atmosphere of awe and uncanny horror that pervades the work. So a cold kiss of anxious lips is, by a wonderful stroke of tragic irony, made the announcement of desolation and death:

"Your kiss is colder  
Than that I have seen an holy anchorite  
Give to a dead man's skull!"

Even when Webster follows, as here, the traditional method of selecting imagery of death and decay, he contrives to extract from it an uncanny kind of beauty, the beauty that fascinates whilst it makes one shudder.

"Methinks her fault and beauty,  
Blended together, show like leprosy,  
The whiter, the fouler."

It is by means of quaint imagery that he is most fond of revealing the nature of his several characters. Frequently the image will give a striking vignette, in which the whole character of the man is laid bare in an illuminating flash:

"He lifts up 's nose, like a foul porpoise before a storm."

*Pes.* "The Lord Ferdinand laughs.

*Delio.* Like a deadly cannon  
That lightens ere it smokes."

"The spring in his face is nothing but the engendering of toads."

All these images are of a novel kind. The similes do not bear the literary stamp of the Virgilian tradition: they are attempts to create for drama a new kind of imagery akin to that of common speech, imagery that will not disturb so much the dramatic illusion of reality. For Webster, like Donne, is at heart a realist. For all his brooding upon the dark places of the soul, for all his pre-occupation with the dim borderland of consciousness, where horror and frenzy hold terrible sway, and death looms, a darkling presence, the dramatist has, at his best, an extraordinary actuality of imaginative vision and phrase. It is this quality of mind and art which enables him to depict with such wonderful power the strange fancies of a guilty conscience:—

“ When I look into the fish-ponds in my garden,  
Methinks I see a thing armed with a rake,  
That seems to strike at me.”

That image of the strange but well-known weapon wielded by the mysterious *thing* cannot be explained away: it can only be appreciated as right with the miraculous rightness of great art.

Realism is not the only quality of style that Webster and Donne have in common. On the contrary, Webster is like Donne in his meditative energy and his scepticism, in his perception of the irony and pathos and mystery of life. With Webster the meditative energy is as marked a characteristic as is his dramatic genius. He has in him much of the character of a gnomic poet. He loves “ sentences ” and affects fables, even admitting them at the expense of truth of characterisation,—cp. Ferdinand’s fable of Reputation, Love, and Death (III, ii, 113-126). Of the “ revenge ” dramatists before him, Chapman alone had this gnomic tendency; none but Chapman had made use of the fable, and, though certain “ sentences,” often drawn originally from Seneca, had become stereotyped and commonplace, sententiousness had not been a characteristic of the type, since dramatists aimed at effects much more startling and popularly impressive than weight of thought could be.

Webster’s preference for the sententious Senecan tragedy might perhaps have been inferred from his dramatic

practice, even in the absence of the positive evidence of his address "To the Reader" in his edition of *The White Devil*. His malcontents serve, amongst other things, the purpose of a satiric, ironic chorus. But generalisation and criticism are by no means limited to them. Indeed, a predilection for generalisation is the most characteristic feature of the dramatist's style. It is at once the source of his greatest strength and of his greatest weakness. In his finest work, the generalisations are not only weighty in themselves and illuminating in their occasion, but contrived with perfect truth of characterisation and a consequent individuality of phrase and manner:—

" Some would think the souls of princes were brought forth by some more weighty cause than those of meaner persons: they are deceived, there's the same hand to them; the like passions sway them; the same reason that makes a vicar to go to law for a tithe-pig, and undo his neighbours, makes them spoil a whole province, and batter down goodly cities with the cannon."

A comparison of this speech of Bosola with its source quoted in the notes (cp. p. 145), will illustrate, not only the closeness of many of Webster's borrowings, but also the wonderful transmutation that may be effected by a touch of genius. The generalization here is not merely apposite, but completely individualised.

It must be admitted, however, that Webster's generalizations on life are not always thus transmuted by the alchemy of genius. His critical judgment seems to have been very uncertain, and his propensity to meditation is, in consequence, sometimes allowed to impede the free movement of his imagination. His occasional sententious rhymed couplets are rarely managed with artistic success: too often they remain isolated, detached matter in the main stream of thought:—

" O, this gloomy world !  
In what a shadow, or deep pit of darkness,  
Doth womanish and fearful mankind live !  
Let worthy minds ne'er stagger in distrust  
To suffer death or shame for what is just :  
Mine is another voyage."

Webster's oft-reiterated mistrust of courts and courtiers involves him in something of an anti-climax at the death

## INTRODUCTION

31

of Antonio. This unfortunate effect, however, is not without its psychological justification, inasmuch as Antonio's last words concerning his son are the natural cry of his own bitter experience.

*Antonio.* . . . " In all our quest of greatness,  
Like wanton boys whose pastime is their care,  
We follow after bubbles blown in the air.  
Pleasure of life, what is 't ? only the good hours  
Of an ague ; merely a preparative to rest,  
To endure vexation. I do not ask  
The process of my death ; only commend me  
To Delio.

*Bosola.* Break, heart !

*Antonio.* And let my son fly the courts of princes." (Dies.)

Webster distilled his wit and wisdom from many simples, and his distillation is complete. He was an extractor of quintessence ; what he seems to have aimed at was a style of extraordinary weight and conciseness. He abandoned the full and heightened style of the earlier dramatists, even the explosive and turbulent force of Marston and Tourneur, and sought after an ideal of uttermost compression. He wrests from every sentence its full weight of meaning. Some of his most wonderful speeches are of extraordinary brevity ; they contain the quintessence of the whole situation. In three words he can depict a mind reeling into darkness and can catch the external expression as well. In Ferdinand's speech, " Cover her face ; mine eyes dazzle ; she died young " (IV, ii, 260), he attains the very acme of concise dramatic expression. ✓



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# THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FERDINAND, *Duke of Calabria.*

CARDINAL, *his brother.*

ANTONIO BOLOGNA, *Steward of the Household to the Duchess.*

DELIO, *his friend.*

DANIEL DE BOSOLA, *Gentleman of the Horse to the Duchess.*

CASTRUCCIO.

MARQUIS OF PESCARA.

COUNT MALATESTI.

RODERIGO.

SILVIO.

GRISOLAN.

DOCTOR.

*The several Madmen.*

DUCHESS OF MALFI.

CARIOLA, *her woman.*

JULIA, *Castruccio's wife, and the Cardinal's mistress.*

Old Lady.

Ladies, Children, Pilgrims, Executioners,  
Officers, and Attendants.

## SCENE :

*At Malfi, Rome, Milan, and elsewhere in Italy.*

# THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

## ACT I.

SCENE I. *Malfi. The presence-chamber in the palace of the DUCHESS.*

*Enter ANTONIO and DELIO.*

*Delio.* You are welcome to your country, dear Antonio ;

You have been long in France, and you return  
A very formal Frenchman in your habit :  
How do you like the French court ?

*Ant.* I admire it :  
In seeking to reduce both state and people  
To a fix'd order, their judicious king  
Begins at home ; quits first his royal palace  
Of flattering sycophants, of dissolute  
And infamous persons,—which he sweetly terms  
His master's master-piece, the work of heaven ;      10  
Considering duly that a prince's court  
Is like a common fountain, whence should flow  
Pure silver drops in general, but if 't chance      i  
Some curs'd example poison 't near the head,  
Death and diseases through the whole land spread.  
And what is 't makes this blessed government  
But a most provident council, who dare freely  
Inform him the corruption of the times ?  
Though some o' the court hold it presumption  
To instruct princes what they ought to do,      20

It is a noble duty to inform them  
 What they ought to foresee.—Here comes Bosola,  
 The only court-gall ; yet I observe his railing  
 Is not for simple love of piety :  
 Indeed, he rails at those things which he wants ;  
 Would be as lecherous, covetous, or proud,  
 Bloody, or envious, as any man,  
 If he had means to be so.—Here's the cardinal.

*Enter CARDINAL and BOSOLA.*

*Bos.* I do haunt you still.

*Card.* So.

30

*Bos.* I have done you better service than to be slighted thus. Miserable age, where only the reward of doing well is the doing of it !

*Card.* You enforce your merit too much.

*Bos.* I fell into the galleys in your service ; where, for two years together, I wore two towels instead of a shirt, with a knot on the shoulder, after the fashion of a Roman mantle. Slighted thus ! I will thrive some way : black-birds fatten best in hard weather ; why not I in these dog-days ?

40

*Card.* Would you could become honest !

*Bos.* With all your divinity do but direct me the way to it. I have known many travel far for it, and yet return as arrant knaves as they went forth, because they carried themselves always along with them. [Exit CARDINAL.] Are you gone ? Some fellows, they say, are possessed with the devil, but this great fellow were able to possess the greatest devil, and make him worse.

*Ant.* He hath denied thee some suit ?

49

*Bos.* He and his brother are like plum-trees that grow crooked over standing-pools ; they are rich and o'er-laden with fruit, but none but crows, pies, and caterpillars feed on them. Could I be one of their flattering panders, I would hang on their ears like a horseleech, till I were full, and then drop off. I pray, leave me.

Who would rely upon these miserable dependencies, in expectation to be advanced to-morrow? what creature ever fed worse than hoping Tantalus? nor ever died any man more fearfully than he that hoped for a pardon. There are rewards for hawks and dogs when they have done us service; but for a soldier that hazards his limbs in a battle, nothing but a kind of geometry is his last supportation.

63

*Delio.* Geometry!

*Bos.* Ay, to hang in a fair pair of slings, take his latter swing in the world upon an honourable pair of crutches, from hospital to hospital. Fare ye well, sir: and yet do not you scorn us; for places in the court are but like beds in the hospital, where this man's head lies at that man's foot, and so lower and lower. [Exit. 70

*Del.* I knew this fellow seven years in the galleys  
For a notorious murther; and 't was thought  
The cardinal suborn'd it: he was releas'd  
By the French general, Gaston de Foix,  
When he recover'd Naples.

*Ant.* 'T is great pity  
He should be thus neglected: I have heard  
He's very valiant. This foul melancholy —  
Will poison all his goodness; for, I'll tell you,  
If too immoderate sleep be truly said  
To be an inward rust unto the soul, 80  
It then doth follow want of action  
Breeds all black malcontents; and their close rearing,  
Like moths in cloth, do hurt for want of wearing.

*Enter CASTRUCCIO, SILVIO, RODERIGO and GRISOLAN.*

*Delio.* The presence 'gins to fill: you promis'd me  
To make me the partaker of the natures  
Of some of your great courtiers.

*Ant.* The lord cardinal's  
And other strangers' that are now in court?  
I shall.—Here comes the great Calabrian duke.

*Enter FERDINAND and Attendants.*

*Ferd.* Who took the ring oftenest ?

90

*Sil.* Antonio Bologna, my lord.

*Ferd.* Our sister duchess' great-master of her household ? Give him the jewel.—When shall we leave this sportive action, and fall to action indeed ?

*Cast.* Methinks, my lord, you should not desire to go to war in person.

*Ferd.* Now for some gravity :—why, my lord ?

*Cast.* It is fitting a soldier arise to be a prince, but not necessary a prince descend to be a captain.

*Ferd.* No.

100

*Cast.* No, my lord ; he were far better do it by a deputy.

*Ferd.* Why should he not as well sleep or eat by a deputy ? this might take idle, offensive, and base office from him, whereas the other deprives him of honour.

*Cast.* Believe my experience, that realm is never long in quiet where the ruler is a soldier.

*Ferd.* Thou toldest me thy wife could not endure fighting.

*Cast.* True, my lord.

110

*Ferd.* And of a jest she broke of a captain she met full of wounds : I have forgot it.

*Cast.* She told him, my lord, he was a pitiful fellow, to lie, like the children of Ismael, all in tents.

*Ferd.* Why, there's a wit were able to undo all the chirurgeons o' the city ; for although gallants should quarrel, and had drawn their weapons, and were ready to go to it, yet her persuasions would make them put up.

*Cast.* That she would, my lord.—How do you like my Spanish gennet ?

120

*Rod.* He is all fire.

*Ferd.* I am of Pliny's opinion, I think he was begot by the wind ; he runs as if he were ballassed with quicksilver.

*Sil.* True, my lord, he reels from the tilt often.

*Rod. Gris.* Ha, ha, ha !

*Ferd.* Why do you laugh ? methinks you that are courtiers should be my touch-wood, take fire when I give fire ; that is, laugh when I laugh, were the subject never so witty. 130

*Cast.* True, my lord : I myself have heard a very good jest, and have scorned to seem to have so silly a wit as to understand it.

*Ferd.* But I can laugh at your fool, my lord.

*Cast.* He cannot speak, you know, but he makes faces : my lady cannot abide him.

*Ferd.* No ?

*Cast.* Nor endure to be in merry company ; for she says too much laughing, and too much company, fills her too full of the wrinkle. 140

*Ferd.* I would, then, have a mathematical instrument made for her face, that she might not laugh out of compass.—I shall shortly visit you at Milan, Lord Silvio.

*Sil.* Your grace shall arrive most welcome.

*Ferd.* You are a good horseman, Antonio : you have excellent riders in France : what do you think of good horsemanship ?

*Ant.* Nobly, my lord : as out of the Grecian horse issued many famous princes, so out of brave horsemanship arise the first sparks of growing resolution, that raise the mind to noble action. 152

*Ferd.* You have bespoke it worthily.

*Sil.* Your brother, the lord cardinal, and sister duchess.

*Re-enter CARDINAL, with DUCHESS, CARIOLA, and JULIA.*

*Card.* Are the galleys come about.

*Gris.* They are, my lord.

*Ferd.* Here's the Lord Silvio is come to take his leave.

*Delio.* Now, sir, your promise : what's that cardinal ?

I mean his temper ? they say he 's a brave fellow,  
 Will play his five thousand crowns at tennis, dance,  
 Court ladies, and one hath fought single combats. 161

*Ant.* Some such flashes superficially hang on him  
 for form ; but observe his inward character : he is a  
 melancholy churchman ; the spring in his face is nothing  
 but the engendering of toads ; where he is jealous of  
 any man, he lays worse plots for them than ever was  
 imposed on Hercules, for he strews in his way flatterers,  
 panders, intelligencers, atheists, and a thousand such  
 political monsters. He should have been Pope ; but  
 instead of coming to it by the primitive decency of the  
 church, he did bestow bribes so largely and so impudently  
 as if he would have carried it away without heaven's  
 knowledge. Some good he hath done— 173

*Delio.* You have given too much of him. What's  
 his brother ?

*Ant.* The duke there ? a most perverse and turbu-  
 lent nature :

What appears in him mirth is merely outside ;  
 If he laugh heartily, it is to laugh  
 All honesty out of fashion.

*Delio.* Twins ?

*Ant.* In quality.

He speaks with others' tongues, and hears men's suits  
 With others' ears ; will seem to sleep o' the bench 180  
 Only to entrap offenders in their answers ;  
 Dooms men to death by information ;  
 Rewards by heresy.

*Delio.* Then the law to him  
 Is like a foul, black cobweb to a spider,—  
 He makes it his dwelling and a prison  
 To entangle those shall feed him.

*Ant.* Most true :

He never pays debts unless they be shrewd turns,  
 And those he will confess that he doth owe.  
 Last, for his brother there, the cardinal,  
 They that do flatter him most say oracles

Hang at his lips ; and verily I believe them,  
 For the devil speaks in them.  
 But for their sister, the right noble duchess,  
 You never fix'd your eye on three fair medals  
 Cast in one figure, of so different temper.  
 For her discourse, it is so full of rapture.  
 You only will begin then to be sorry  
 When she doth end her speech, and wish, in wonder,  
 She held it less vain-glory to talk much,  
 Than your penance to hear her : whilst she speaks, 200  
 She throws upon a man so sweet a look,  
 That it were able to raise one to a galliard  
 That lay in a dead palsy, and to dote  
 On that sweet countenance ; but in that look  
 There speaketh so divine a continence  
 As cuts off all lascivious and vain hope.  
 Her days are practis'd in such noble virtue,  
 That sure her nights, nay, more, her very sleeps,  
 Are more in heaven than other ladies' shrifts.  
 Let all sweet ladies break their flattering glasses, 210  
 And dress themselves in her.

*Delio.* Fie, Antonio,  
 You play the wire-drawer with her commendations.

*Ant.* I'll case the picture up : only thus much ;  
 All her particular worth grows to this sum,—  
 She stains the time past, lights the time to come.

*Cari.* You must attend my lady in the gallery,  
 Some half an hour hence.

*Ant.* I shall. [*Exeunt ANTONIO and DELIO.*

*Ferd.* Sister, I have a suit to you.

*Duch.* To me, sir ?

*Ferd.* A gentleman here, Daniel de Bosola,  
 One that was in the galleys——

*Duch.* Yes, I know him. 220

*Ferd.* A worthy fellow he is : pray, let me entreat for  
 The provisorship of your horse.

*Duch.* Your knowledge of him  
 Commends him and prefers him.

*Ferd.* Call him hither. [Exit Attendant.  
We [are] now upon parting. Good Lord Silvio,  
Do us command to all our noble friends  
At the leaguer.

*Sil.* Sir, I shall.

*Duch.* You are for Milan ?

*Sil.* I am.

*Duch.* Bring the caroches.—We 'll bring you down' to  
the haven.

[*Exeunt* DUCHESS, SILVIO, CASTRUCCIO, RODERIGO,  
GRISOLAN, CARIOLA, JULIA, and Attendants.

*Card.* Be sure you entertain that Bosola  
For your intelligence : I would not be seen in 't ; 230  
And therefore many times I have slighted him  
When he did court our furtherance, as this morning.

*Ferd.* Antonio, the great-master of her house-  
hold,

Had been far fitter.

*Card.* You are deceiv'd in him :  
His nature is too honest for such business.—  
He comes : I 'll leave you.

[*Exit.*]

*Re-enter* BOSOLA.

*Bos.* I was lur'd to you.  
*Ferd.* My brother, ~~here~~, the cardinal could never  
Abide you.

*Bos.* Never since he was in my debt.  
*Ferd.* May be ~~some~~ some oblique character in your face  
Made him suspect you.

*Bos.* He did suspect me wrongfully. 240

*Ferd.* For that  
You must give great men leave to take their times.  
Distrust doth cause us seldom be deceiv'd :  
You see the oft shaking of the cedar-tree  
Fastens it more at root.

*Bos.* Yet, take heed ;  
For to suspect a friend unworthily

Instructs him the next way to suspect you,  
And prompts him to deceive you.

*Ferd.*

There's gold.

*Bos.*

So :

What follows ? never rained such showers as these  
Without thunderbolts i' the tail of them : whose throat  
must I cut ?

250

*Ferd.* Your inclination to shed blood rides post  
Before my occasion to use you. I give you that  
To live i' the court here, and observe the duchess :  
To note all the particulars of her haviour,  
What suitors do solicit her for marriage,  
And whom she best affects. She's a young widow :  
I would not have her marry again.

*Bos.*

No, sir ?

*Ferd.* Do not you ask the reason ; but be satisfied.  
I say I would not.

*Bos.* It seems you would create me  
One of your familiars.

*Ferd.*

Familiar ! what's that ?

*Bos.* Why, a very quaint invisible devil in flesh,—  
An intelligencer.

*Ferd.* Such a kind of thriving thing  
I would wish thee ; and ere long thou mayst arrive  
At a higher place by 't.

*Bos.* Take your devils,  
Which hell calls angels : these curs'd gifts would make  
You a corrupter, me an impudent traitor :  
And should I take these, they'd take me [to] hell.

*Ferd.* Sir, I'll take nothing from you that I have  
given :  
There is a place that I procured for you  
This morning, the provisorship o' the horse ;

270

Have you heard on't ?

*Bos.*

No.

*Ferd.* 'T is yours : is 't not worth thanks ?

*Bos.* I would have you curse yourself now, that your  
bounty

(Which makes men truly noble) e'er should make me  
 A villain. O, that to avoid ingratitude  
 For the good deed you have done me, I must do  
 All the ill man can invent ! Thus the devil  
 Candies all sins o'er ; and what heaven terms vile,  
 That names he complimentary.

*Ferd.* Be yourself ;  
 Keep your old garb of melancholy ; 't will express  
 You envy those that stand above your reach, 280  
 Yet strive not to come near 'em : this will gain  
 Access to private lodgings, where yourself  
 May, like a politic dormouse—

*Bos.* As I have seen some  
 Feed in a lord's dish, half asleep, not seeming  
 To listen to any talk ; and yet these rogues  
 Have cut his throat in a dream. What's my place ?  
 The provisorship o' the horse ? say, then, my corruption  
 Grew out of horse-dung : I am your creature.

*Ferd.* Away !  
*Bos.* Let good men, for good deeds, covet good fame,  
 Since place and riches oft are bribes of shame : 290  
 Sometimes the devil doth preach. [Exit.

*Re-enter DUCHESS, CARDINAL, and CARIOLA.*

*Card.* We are to part from you ; and your own discretion  
 Must now be your director.

*Ferd.* You are a widow :  
 You know already what man is ; and therefore  
 Let not youth, high promotion, eloquence—

*Card.* No. Nor anything without the addition,  
 honour,  
 Sway your high blood.

*Ferd.* Marry ! they are most luxurious  
 Will wed twice.

*Card.* O, fie !

*Ferd.* Their livers are more spotted  
Than Laban's sheep.

*Duch.* Will you hear me ?  
I 'll never marry.

*Card.* So most widows say ; 300  
But commonly that motion lasts no longer  
Than the turning of an hour-glass : the funeral sermon  
And it end both together.

*Ferd.* Now hear me :  
You live in a rank pasture, here, i' the court ;  
There is a kind of honey-dew that 's deadly ;  
'T will poison your fame : look to 't : be not cunning ;  
For they whose faces do belie their hearts  
Are witches ere they arrive at twenty years,  
Ay, and give the devil suck.

*Duch.* This is terrible good counsel. 310

*Ferd.* Hypocrisy is woven of a fine small thread,  
Subtler than Vulcan's engine : yet, believe 't,  
Your darkest actions, nay, your privat'st thoughts,  
Will come to light.

*Card.* You may flatter yourself,  
And take your own choice ; privately be married  
Under the eaves of night —

*Ferd.* Think 't the best voyage  
That e'er you made ; like the irregular crab,  
Which, though 't goes backward, thinks that it goes right  
Because it goes its own way : but observe,  
Such weddings may more properly be said 320  
To be executed than celebrated.

*Card.* The marriage night  
Is the entrance into some prison.

*Ferd.* And those joys,  
Those lustful pleasures, are like heavy sleeps  
Which do fore-run man's mischief.

*Card.* Fare you well.  
Wisdom begins at the end : remember it. [Exit.

*Duch.* I think this speech between you both studied,  
It came so roundly off.

*Ferd.* You are my sister :  
 This was my father's poniard, do you see ?  
 I'd be loth to see 't look rusty, 'cause 't was his.  
 I would have you give o'er these chargeable revels : 330  
 A visor and a mask are whispering-rooms  
 That were never built for goodness ;—fare ye well ;—  
 What cannot a neat knave with a smooth tale  
 Make a woman believe ? Farewell, lusty widow. [*Exit.*]

*Duch.* Shall this move me ? If all my royal kindred  
 Lay in my way unto this marriage,  
 I'd make them my low footsteps : and even now,  
 Even in this hate, as men in some great battles,  
 By apprehending danger, have achiev'd  
 Almost impossible actions (I have heard soldiers say so),  
 So I through frights and threatenings will assay 341  
 This dangerous venture. Let old wives report  
 I wink'd and chose a husband.—*Cariola*,  
 To thy known secrecy I have given up  
 More than my life,—my fame.

*Cari.* Both shall be safe ;  
 For I'll conceal this secret from the world  
 As warily as those that trade in poison  
 Keep poison from their children.

*Duch.* Thy protestation  
 Is ingenious and hearty : I believe it.  
 Is Antonio come ?

*Cari.* He attends you.

*Duch.* Good dear soul,  
 Leave me ; but place thyself behind the arras, 351  
 Where thou mayst overhear us. Wish me good speed ;  
 For I am going into a wilderness,  
 Where I shall find nor path nor friendly clew  
 To be my guide. [*CARIOLA goes behind the arras.*]

*Enter ANTONIO.*

I sent for you : sit down ;  
 Take pen and ink, and write : are you ready ?

*Ant.*

Yes.

*Duch.* What did I say ?*Ant.* That I should write somewhat.*Duch.*

O, I remember.

After these triumphs and this large expense

It's fit, like thrifty husbands, we inquire

360

What's laid up for to-morrow.

*Ant.* So please your beauteous excellence.*Duch.*

Beauteous !

Indeed, I thank you : I look young for your sake ;

You have ta'en my cares upon you.

*Ant.*

I 'll fetch your grace

The particulars of your revenue and expense.

*Duch.*

O, you are

An upright treasurer : but you mistook ;

For when I said I meant to make inquiry

What's laid up for to-morrow, I did mean

What's laid up yonder for me.

*Ant.*

Where ?

*Duch.*

In heaven.

I am making my will (as 't is fit princes should,

In perfect memory), and, I pray, sir, tell me,

Were not one better make it smiling, thus,

Than in deep groans and terrible ghastly looks,

As if the gifts we parted with procur'd

That violent distraction ?

*Ant.*

O, much better.

*Duch.*If I had a husband now, this care were quit :  
But I intend to make you overseer.

What good deed shall we first remember ? say.

*Ant.*Begin with that first good deed began i' the  
world

After man's creation, the sacrament of marriage : 380

I'd have you first provide for a good husband ;

Give him all.

*Duch.*

All !

*Ant.*

Yes, your excellent self.

*Duch.*

In a winding-sheet ?

*Ant.*

In a couple.

*Duch.* Saint Winifred, that were a strange will !

*Ant.* 'T were stranger if there were no will in you  
To marry again.

*Duch.* What do you think of marriage ?

*Ant.* I tak 't, as those that deny purgatory,  
It locally contains or heaven or hell ;  
There 's no third place in 't.

*Duch.* How do you affect it ?

*Ant.* My banishment, feeling my melancholy, 390  
Would often reason thus.

*Duch.* Pray, let 's hear it.

*Ant.* Say a man never marry, nor have children,  
What takes that from him ? only the bare name  
Of being a father, or the weak delight  
To see the little wanton ride a-cock-horse  
Upon a painted stick, or hear him chatter  
Like a taught starling.

*Duch.* Fie, fie, what 's all this ?  
One of your eyes is blood-shot ; use my ring to 't ;  
They say 't is very sovereign : 't was my wedding-ring,  
And I did vow never to part with it 400  
But to my second husband.

*Ant.* You have parted with it now.

*Duch.* Yes, to help your eye-sight.

*Ant.* You have made me stark blind.

*Duch.*

How ?

*Ant.* There is a saucy and ambitious devil  
Is dancing in this circle.

*Duch.* Remove him.

*Ant.*

How ?

*Duch.* There needs small conjuration, when your  
finger

May do it : thus ; is it fit ?

[*She puts the ring upon his finger : he kneels*

*Ant.*

What said you ?

*Duch.*

This goodly roof of yours is too low built ; Sir,

I cannot stand upright in 't nor discourse, 410  
 Without I raise it higher : raise yourself ;  
 Or, if you please, my hand to help you : so. [Raises him.

*Ant.* Ambition, madam, is a great man's madness,  
 That is not kept in chains and close-pent rooms,  
 But in fair lightsome lodgings, and is girt  
 With the wild noise of prattling visitants,  
 Which makes it lunatic beyond all cure.  
 Conceive not I am so stupid but I aim  
 Whereto your favours tend : but he's a fool  
 That, being a-cold, would thrust his hands i' the fire  
 To warm them.

*Duch.* So, now the ground 's broke, 421  
 You may discover what a wealthy mine  
 I make you lord of.

*Ant.* O my unworthiness !

*Duch.* You were ill to sell yourself :  
 This darkening of your worth is not like that  
 Which tradesmen use i' the city ; their false lights  
 Are to rid bad wares off : and I must tell you,  
 If you will know where breathes a complete man  
 (I speak it without flattery), turn your eyes,  
 And progress through yourself. 430

*Ant.* Were there nor heaven nor hell,  
 I should be honest : I have long serv'd virtue,  
 And ne'er ta'en wages of her.

*Duch.* Now she pays it.  
 The misery of us that are born great !  
 We are forc'd to woo, because none dare woo us ;  
 And as a tyrant doubles with his words,  
 And fearfully equivocates, so we  
 Are forc'd to express our violent passions  
 In riddles and in dreams, and leave the path  
 Of simple virtue, which was never made 440  
 To seem the thing it is not. Go, go brag  
 You have left me heartless ; mine is in your bosom :  
 I hope 't will multiply love there. You do tremble :  
 Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh,

To fear more than to love me. Sir, be confident :  
 What is 't distracts you ? This is flesh and blood, sir ;  
 'T is not the figure cut in alabaster  
 Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man !  
 I do here put off all vain ceremony,  
 And only do appear to you a young widow 450  
 That claims you for her husband, and, like a widow,  
 I use but half a blush in 't.

*Ant.*                    Truth speak for me ;  
 I will remain the constant sanctuary  
 Of your good name.

*Duch.*                I thank you, gentle love :  
 And 'cause you shall not come to me in debt,  
 Being now my steward, here upon your lips  
 I sign your *Quietus est*. This you should have begg'd  
 now :

I have seen children oft eat sweetmeats thus,  
 As fearful to devour them too soon.

*Ant.* But for your brothers ?

*Duch.*                Do not think of them :  
 All discord without this circumference 461  
 Is only to be pitied, and not fear'd :  
 Yet, should they know it, time will easily  
 Scatter the tempest.

*Ant.*                These words should be mine,  
 And all the parts you have spoke, if some part of it  
 Would not have savour'd flattery.

*Duch.*                Kneel.

[CARIOLA comes from behind the arras.

*Ant.*                Ha !

*Duch.* Be not amaz'd ; this woman 's of my counsel :  
 I have heard lawyers say, a contract in a chamber  
*Per verba presenti* is absolute marriage.

[She and ANTONIO kneel.  
 Bless, heaven, this sacred gordian, which let violence  
 Never untwine ! 471

*Ant.* And may our sweet affections, like the spheres,  
 Be still in motion !

*Duch.* Quickening, and make  
The like soft music !

*Ant.* That we may imitate the loving palms,  
Best emblem of a peaceful marriage,  
That never bore fruit, divided !

*Duch.* What can the church force more ?

*Ant.* That fortune may not know an accident,  
Either of joy or sorrow, to divide 480  
Our fix'd wishes !

*Duch.* How can the church build faster ?  
We now are man and wife, and 't is the church  
That must but echo this.—Maid, stand apart :—  
I now am blind.

*Ant.* What 's your conceit in this ?

*Duch.* I would have you lead your fortune by the  
hand  
Unto your marriage-bed :  
(You speak in me this, for we now are one : )  
We 'll only lie, and talk together, and plot  
To appease my humorous kindred ; and if you please,  
Like the old tale in Alexander and Lodowick, 490  
Lay a naked sword between us, keep us chaste.  
O, let me shrowd my blushes in your bosom,  
Since 't is the treasury of all my secrets !

[*Exeunt DUCHESS and ANTONIO.*

*Cari.* Whether the spirit of greatness or of woman  
Reign most in her, I know not ; but it shows  
A fearful madness : I owe her much of pity [Exit.

## ACT II.

SCENE I. *Malfi. An apartment in the palace of the DUCHESS.*

*Enter BOSOLA and CASTRUCCIO.*

*Bos.* You say you would fain be taken for an eminent courtier?

*Cast.* 'T is the very main of my ambition.

*Bos.* Let me see: you have a reasonable good face for't already, and your night-cap expresses your ears sufficient largely. I would have you learn to twirl the strings of your band with a good grace, and in a set speech, at the end of every sentence, to hum three or four times, or blow your nose till it smart again, to recover your memory. When you come to be a president in criminal causes, if you smile upon a prisoner, hang him; but if you frown upon him and threaten him, let him be sure to 'scape the gallows. 13

*Cast.* I would be a very merry president.

*Bos.* Do not sup o' nights; 't will beget you an admirable wit.

*Cast.* Rather it would make me have a good stomach to quarrel; for they say, your roaring boys eat meat seldom, and that makes them so valiant. But how shall I know whether the people take me for an eminent fellow? 21

*Bos.* I will teach a trick to know it: give out you lie a-dying, and if you hear the common people curse you, be sure you are taken for one of the prime night-caps.

*Enter an Old Lady.*

You come from painting now.

*Old Lady.* From what?

*Bos.* Why, from your scurvy face-physic. To behold thee not painted inclines somewhat near a miracle: these in thy face here were deep ruts and foul sloughs the last progress. There was a lady in France that, having had the small-pox, flayed the skin off her face to make it more level; and whereas before she looked like a nutmeg-grater, after she resembled an abortive hedge-hog.

*Old Lady.* Do you call this painting?

34

*Bos.* No, no, but you call [it] careening of an old morphewed lady, to make her disembogue again: there's rough-cast phrase to your plastic.

*Old Lady.* It seems you are well acquainted with my closet.

*Bos.* One would suspect it for a shop of witchcraft, to find in it the fat of serpents, spawn of snakes, Jews' spittle, and their young children's ordure; and all these for the face. I would sooner eat a dead pigeon taken from the soles of the feet of one sick of the plague, than kiss one of you fasting. Here are two of you, whose sin of your youth is the very patrimony of the physician; makes him renew his footcloth with the spring, and change his high-priced courtezan with the fall of the leaf. I do wonder you do not loathe yourselves. Observe my meditation now.

What thing is in this outward form of man

51

To be belov'd? We account it ominous,

If nature do produce a colt, or lamb,

A fawn, or goat, in any limb resembling

A man, and fly from't as a prodigy:

Man stands amaz'd to see his deformity

In any other creature but himself.

But in our own flesh though we bear diseases

Which have their true names only ta'en from beasts,—

As the most ulcerous wolf and swinish measles,—

60

Though we are eaten up of lice and worms,

And though continually we bear about us

A rotten and dead body, we delight

To hide it in rich tissue: all our fear,

Nay, all our terror, is, lest our physician  
Should put us in the ground to be made sweet.—

Your wife's gone to Rome: you two couple, and get  
you to the wells at Lucca to recover your aches. I have  
other work on foot.

[*Exeunt* CASTRUCCIO and Old Lady.  
I observe our duchess

Is sick a-days, she pukes, her stomach seethes, 70  
The fins of her eye-lids look most teeming blue,  
She wanes i' the cheek, and waxes fat i' the flank,  
And, contrary to our Italian fashion,  
Wears a loose-bodied gown: there's somewhat in 't.  
I have a trick may chance discover it,  
A pretty one; I have bought some apricocks,  
The first our spring yields.

*Enter* ANTONIO and DELIO, *talking together apart*.

*Delio.* And so long since married?  
You amaze me.

*Ant.* Let me seal your lips for ever:  
For, did I think that anything but the air  
Could carry these words from you, I should wish 80  
You had no breath at all.—Now, sir, in your con-  
templation?

You are studying to become a great wise fellow.

*Bos.* O, sir, the opinion of wisdom is a foul tetter  
that runs all over a man's body: if simplicity direct us  
to have no evil, it directs us to a happy being; for the  
subtest folly proceeds from the subtest wisdom: let  
me be simply honest.

*Ant.* I do understand your inside.

*Bos.* Do you so?

*Ant.* Because you would not seem to appear to the  
world 90

Puff'd up with your preferment, you continue

This out-of-fashion melancholy: leave it, leave it.

*Bos.* Give me leave to be honest in any phrase, in

any compliment whatsoever. Shall I confess myself to you ? I look no higher than I can reach : they are the gods that must ride on winged horses. A lawyer's mule of a slow pace will both suit my disposition and business ; for, mark me, when a man's mind rides faster than his horse can gallop, they quickly both tire.

*Ant.* You would look up to heaven, but I think 100  
The devil, that rules i' the air, stands in your light.

*Bos.* O, sir, you are lord of the ascendant, chief man with the duchess : a duke was your cousin-german removed. Say you were lineally descended from King Pepin, or he himself, what of this ? search the heads of the greatest rivers in the world, you shall find them but bubbles of water. Some would think the souls of princes were brought forth by some more weighty cause than those of meaner persons : they are deceived, there's the same hand to them ; the like passions sway them ; the same reason that makes a vicar to go to law for a tithe-pig, and undo his neighbours, makes them spoil a whole province, and batter down goodly cities with the cannon.

[*Exeunt.*]

113

*Enter DUCHESS and Ladies.*

*Duch.* Your arm, Antonio : do I not grow fat ?  
I am exceeding short-winded.—*Bosola*,  
I would have you, sir, provide for me a litter ;  
Such a one as the Duchess of Florence rode in.

*Bos.* The duchess us'd one when she was great with child.

*Duch.* I think she did.—Come hither, mend my ruff :  
Here, when ? thou art such a tedious lady ; and 120  
Thy breath smells of lemon-pills : would thou hadst done !

Shall I swound under thy fingers ? I am  
So troubled with the mother !

*Bos.* [Aside.] I fear too much.

*Duch.* I have heard you say that the French courtiers Wear their hats on 'fore the king.

*Ant.* I have seen it.

*Duch.* In the presence ?

*Ant.* Yes.

*Duch.* Why should not we bring up that fashion ?  
'T is ceremony more than duty that consists  
In the removing of a piece of felt :  
Be you the example to the rest o' the court ;  
Put on your hat first.

130

*Ant.* You must pardon me :  
I have seen, in colder countries than in France,  
Nobles stand bare to the prince ; and the distinction  
Methought show'd reverently.

*Bos.* I have a present for your grace.

*Duch.* For me, sir ?

*Bos.* Apricocks, madam.

*Duch.* O, sir, where are they ?  
I have heard of none to-year.

*Bos.* [Aside.] Good ; her colour rises.

*Duch.* Indeed, I thank you : they are wondrous fair  
ones.

What an unskilful fellow is our gardener !

140

We shall have none this month.

*Bos.* Will not your grace pare them ?

*Duch.* No : they taste of musk, methinks ; indeed  
they do.

*Bos.* I know not : yet I wish your grace had par'd  
'em.

*Duch.* Why ?

*Bos.* I forget to tell you, the knave gardener,  
Only to raise his profit by them the sooner,  
Did ripen them in horse-dung.

*Duch.* O, you jest.—  
You shall judge : pray, taste one.

*Ant.* Indeed, madam,  
I do not love the fruit.

*Duch.* Sir, you are loth  
To rob us of our dainties : 't is a delicate fruit ;  
They say they are restorative.

150

*Bos.* 'T is a pretty art,  
This grafting.  
*Duch.* 'T is so ; bettering of nature.  
*Bos.* To make a pippin grow upon a crab,  
A damson on a black-thorn.—[*Aside.*] How greedily she  
eats them !

*Duch.* I thank you, Bosola : they were right good  
ones  
If they do not make me sick.

*Ant.* How now, madam !  
*Duch.* This green fruit and my stomach are not  
friends :  
O, I am in an extreme cold sweat !

*Bos.* I am very sorry.  
*Duch.* Lights to my chamber !—O good Antonio,  
I fear I am undone !

*Delio.* Lights there, lights ! 160  
[*Exeunt DUCHESS and Ladies.—Exit, on  
the other side, BOSOLA.*]

*Ant.* O my most trusty Delio, we are lost !  
I fear she 's fall'n in labour ; and there 's left  
No time for her remove.

*Delio.* Have you prepar'd  
Those ladies to attend her ? and procur'd  
That politic safe conveyance for the midwife  
Your duchess plotted ?

*Ant.* I have.

*Delio.* Make use, then, of this forc'd occasion :  
Give out that Bosola hath poison'd her  
With these apricocks ; that will give some colour  
For her keeping close.

*Ant.* Fie, fie, the physicians 170  
Will then flock to her.

*Delio.* For that you may pretend  
She 'll use some prepar'd antidote of her own,  
Lest the physicians should re-poison her.

*Ant.* I am lost in amazement : I know not what to  
think on 't.

*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A hall in the same palace.*

*Enter BOSOLA.*

*Bos.* So, so, there's no question but her techiness and most vulturous eating of the apricocks are apparent signs of breeding.

*Enter an Old Lady.*

Now ?

*Old Lady.* I am in haste, sir.

*Bos.* There was a young waiting-woman had a monstrous desire to see the glass-house——

*Old Lady.* Nay, pray, let me go.

*Bos.* And it was only to know what strange instrument it was——

*Old Lady.* I will hear no more of the glass-house. You are still abusing women !

*Bos.* Who, I ? no ; only, by the way now and then, mention your frailties. The orange-tree bears ripe and green fruit and blossoms all together ; and some of you give entertainment for pure love, but more for more precious reward. The lusty spring smells well ; but drooping autumn tastes well. If we have the same golden showers that rained in the time of Jupiter the thunderer, you have the same Danäes still, to hold up their laps to receive them. Didst thou never study the mathematics ?

22

*Old Lady.* What's that, sir ?

*Bos.* Why, to know the trick how to make a many lines meet in one centre. Go, go, give your foster-daughters good counsel : tell them, that the devil takes delight to hang at a woman's girdle, like a false rusty watch, that she cannot discern how the time passes.

[*Exit Old Lady.*

*Enter ANTONIO, RODERIGO, and GRISOLAN.*

*Ant.* Shut up the court-gates.

*Rod.* Why, sir? what's the danger?

*Ant.* Shut up the posterns presently, and call 30  
All the officers o' the court.

*Gris.* I shall instantly. [Exit.

*Ant.* Who keeps the key o' the park-gate?

*Rod.* Forobosco.

*Ant.* Let him bring 't presently.

*Re-enter GRISOLAN with Servants.*

*1st Serv.* O, gentleman o' the court, the foulest  
treason!

*Bos. [Aside.]* If that these apricocks should be poison'd  
now,

Without my knowledge?

*1st Serv.* There was taken even now a Switzer in the  
duchess' bed-chamber——

*2nd Serv.* A Switzer!

*Bos.* Ha, ha, ha!

40

*1st Serv.* 'T was a French plot, upon my life.

*2nd Serv.* To see what the devil can do!

*Ant.* All the officers here?

*Servants.* We are.

*Ant.* Gentlemen,

We have lost much plate you know; and but this  
evening

Jewels, to the value of four thousand ducats,

Are missing in the duchess' cabinet.

Are the gates shut?

*Serv.* Yes.

*Ant.* 'T is the duchess' pleasure

Each officer be lock'd into his chamber

50

Till the sun-rising; and to send the keys

Of all their chests and of their outward doors

Into her bed-chamber. She is very sick.

*Rod.* At her pleasure.

*Ant.* She entreats you take 't not ill : the innocent  
Shall be the more approv'd by it.

*Bos.* Gentlemen o' the wood-yard, where's your  
Switzer now ?

*1st Serv.* By this hand, 't was credibly reported by  
one o' the black guard.

[*Exeunt all except ANTONIO and DELIO.*]

*Delio.* How fares it with the duchess ?

*Ant.* She 's expos'd  
Unto the worst of torture, pain and fear. 61

*Delio.* Speak to her all happy comfort.

*Ant.* How I do play the fool with mine own danger !  
You are this night, dear friend, to post to Rome :  
My life lies in your service

*Delio.* Do not doubt me.

*Ant.* O, 't is far from me : and yet fear presents me  
Somewhat that looks like danger.

*Delio.* Believe it,  
'T is but the shadow of your fear, no more :  
How superstitiously we mind our evils !  
The throwing down salt, or crossing of a hare, 70  
Bleeding at nose, the stumbling of a horse,  
Or singing of a cricket, are of power  
To daunt whole man in us. Sir, fare you well :  
I wish you all the joys of a bless'd father ;  
And, for my faith, lay this unto your breast,—  
Old friends, like old swords, still are trusted best. [*Exit.*]

*Enter CARIOLA.*

*Cari.* Sir, you are the happy father of a son :  
Your wife commends him to you.

*Ant.* Blessed comfort !—  
For heaven's sake, tend her well : I 'll presently  
Go set a figure for 's nativity. [*Exeunt.*] 80

SCENE III. *The court of the same palace.*

*Enter BOSOLA, with a dark lantern.*

*Bos.* Sure I did hear a woman shriek : list, ha !  
 And the sound came, if I receiv'd it right,  
 From' the duchess' lodgings. There 's some stratagem  
 In the confining all our courtiers  
 To their several wards : I must have part of it ;  
 My intelligence will freeze else. List, again !  
 It may be 't was the melancholy bird,  
 Best friend of silence and of solitariness,  
 The owl, that screamed so.—Ha ! Antonio !

*Enter ANTONIO.*

*Ant.* I heard some noise.—Who 's there ? what art  
 thou ? speak.

10

*Bos.* Antonio, put not your face nor body  
 To such a forc'd expression of fear :  
 I am Bosola, your friend.

*Ant.* Bosola !—

[*Aside.*] This mole does undermine me.—Heard  
 you not

A noise even now ?

*Bos.* From whence ?

*Ant.* From the duchess' lodging.

*Bos.* Not I : did you ?

*Ant.* I did, or else I dream'd.

*Bos.* Let 's walk towards it.

*Ant.* No : it may be 't was  
 But the rising of the wind.

*Bos.* . . . . . Very likely  
 Methinks 't is very cold, and yet you sweat :  
 You look wildly.

*Ant.* I have been setting a figure  
 For the duchess' jewels.

20

*Bos.* Ah, and how falls your question ?  
Do you find it radical ?

*Ant.* What's that to you ?  
'T is rather to be question'd what design,  
When all men were commanded to their lodgings,  
Makes you a night-walker.

*Bos.* In sooth, I'll tell you :  
Now all the court 's asleep, I thought the devil  
Had least to do here ; I come to say my prayers ;  
And if it do offend you I do so,  
You are a fine courtier.

*Ant.* [Aside.] This fellow will undo me,—  
You gave the duchess apricocks to-day : 30  
Pray heaven they were not poison'd !

*Bos.* Poison'd ! a Spanish fig  
For the imputation.

*Ant.* Traitors are ever confident  
Till they are discover'd. There were jewels stol'n too :  
In my conceit, none are to be suspected  
More than yourself.

*Bos.* You are a *false steward*,  
*Ant.* Saucy slave, I'll pull thee up by the roots.  
*Bos.* May be the ruin will crush you to pieces.  
*Ant.* You are an impudent snake indeed, sir :  
Are you scarce warm, and do you show your sting ? 40  
You libel well, sir.

*Bos.* No, sir : copy it out,  
And I will set my hand to 't.

*Ant.* [Aside.] My nose bleeds.  
One that were superstitious would count  
This ominous, when it merely comes by chance :  
Two letters, that are wrought here for my name,  
Are drown'd in blood ! Mere accident.—For you, sir,  
I'll take order ; i' the morn you shall be safe ;—  
[Aside.] 'T is that must colour her lying in :—

Sir, this door you pass not :  
I do not hold it fit that you come near 50  
The duchess' lodgings, till you have quit yourself.—

[*Aside.*] The great are like the base, nay, they are the same,

When they seek shameful ways to avoid shame. [Exit.

*Bos.* Antonio hereabout did drop a paper :—

Some of your help, false friend :—O, here it is. 55

What's here? a child's nativity calculated! [Reads.

“*The duchess was delivered of a son, 'tween the hours twelve and one in the night, Anno Dom. 1504,*” that's this year—“*decimo nono Decembris,*”—that's this night—“*taken according to the meridian of Malfi,*”—that's our duchess: happy discovery!—

“*The lord of the first house being combust in the ascendant, signifies short life; and Mars being in a human sign, joined to the tail of the Dragon, in the eighth house, doth threaten a violent death. Cætera non scrutantur.*”

Why, now 't is most apparent; this precise fellow  
Is the duchess' rogue :—I have it to my wish!

This is a parcel of intelligency

Our courtiers were cas'd up for: it needs must follow 70

That I must be committed on pretence

Of poisoning her; which I'll endure, and laugh at.

If one could find the father now! but that

Time will discover. Old Castruccio

I' the morning posts to Rome: by him I'll send

A letter that shall make her brothers' galls

O'erflow their livers. This was a thrifty way.

Though lust do mask in ne'er so strange disguise,

She's oft found witty, but is never wise.

[Exit.

SCENE IV. Rome. An apartment in the palace of the CARDINAL.

Enter CARDINAL and JULIA.

*Card.* Sit: thou art my best of wishes. Prithee, tell me

What trick didst thou invent to come to Rome  
Without thy husband ?

*Julia.* Why, my lord, I told him  
I came to visit an old anchorite  
Here for devotion.

*Card.* Thou art a witty false one,—  
I mean, to him.

*Julia.* You have prevail'd with me  
Beyond my strongest thoughts : I would not now  
Find you inconstant.

*Card.* Do not put thyself  
To such a voluntary torture, which proceeds  
Out of your own guilt.

*Julia.* How, my lord !

*Card.* You fear 10  
My constancy, because you have approv'd  
Those giddy and wild turnings in yourself.

*Julia.* Did you e'er find them ?

*Card.* Sooth, generally for women,  
A man might strive to make glass malleable,  
Ere he should make them fixèd.

*Julia.* So, my lord.

*Card.* We had need go borrow that fantastic glass  
Invented by Galileo the Florentine  
To view another spacious world i' the moon,  
And look to find a constant woman there.

*Julia.* This is very well, my lord.

*Card.* Why do you weep ?  
Are tears your justification ? the self-same tears 21  
Will fall into your husband's bosom, lady,  
With a loud protestation that you love him  
Above the world. Come, I'll love you wisely,  
That's jealously.

*Julia.* I'll go home  
To my husband.

*Card.* You may thank me, lady,  
I have taken you off your melancholy perch,  
Bore you upon my fist, and show'd you game,

And let you fly at it.—I pray thee, kiss me.—  
 When thou wast with thy husband, thou wast watched  
 Like a tame elephant :—still you are to thank me :—  
 Thou hadst only kisses from him and high feeding ;  
 But what delight was that ? 't was just like one  
 That hath a little fingering on the lute,  
 Yet cannot tune it :—still you are to thank me,

*Julia.* You told me of a piteous wound i' the heart,  
 And a sick liver, when you woo'd me first,  
 And spake like one in physic.

*Card.*

Who's that ? ——

*Enter Servant.*

Rest firm, for my affection to thee,  
 Lightning moves slow to 't.

*Serv.* Madam, a gentleman, 40  
 That's come post from Malfi, desires to see you.

*Card.* Let him enter : I'll withdraw. [Exit.

*Serv.* He says  
 Your husband, old Castruccio, is come to Rome,  
 Most pitifully tir'd with riding post. [Exit.

*Enter DELIO.*

*Julia.* [Aside.] Signior Delio ! 't is one of my old  
 suitors.

*Delio.* I was bold to come and see you.

*Julia.* Sir, you are welcome.

*Delio.* Do you lie here ?

*Julia.* Sure, your own experience  
 Will satisfy you no : our Roman prelates  
 Do not keep lodging for ladies.

*Delio.* . . . Very well :

I have brought you no commendations from your hus-  
 band, 50

For I know none by him.

*Julia.* I hear he's come to Rome.

*Delio.* I never knew man and beast, of a horse and a knight,  
 So weary of each other : if he had had a good back,  
 He would have undertook to have borne his horse,  
 His breech was so pitifully sore.

*Julia.* Your laughter  
 Is my pity.

*Delio.* Lady, I know not whether  
 You want money, but I have brought you some.

*Julia.* From my husband ?

*Delio.* No, from mine own allowance.

*Julia.* I must hear the condition, ere I be bound to  
 take it.

*Delio.* Look on 't, 't is gold : hath it not a fine  
 colour ? 60

*Julia.* I have a bird more beautiful.

*Delio.* Try the sound on 't.

*Julia.* A lute-string far exceeds it :  
 It hath no smell, like cassia or civet ;  
 Nor is it physical, though some fond doctors  
 Persuade us seeth 't in cullises. I 'll tell you,  
 This is a creature bred by —

*Re-enter Servant.*

*Serv.* Your husband 's come,  
 Hath deliver'd a letter to the Duke of Calabria  
 That, to my thinking, hath put him out of his wits.

[*Exit.*]

*Julia.* Sir, you hear :  
 Pray, let me know your business and your suit 70  
 As briefly as can be.

*Delio.* With good speed : I would wish you,  
 At such time as you are non-resident  
 With your husband, my mistress.

*Julia.* Sir, I 'll go ask my husband if I shall,  
 And straight return your answer.

[*Exit.*]

*Delio.* Very fine !

Is this her wit, or honesty, that speaks thus ?  
 I heard one say the duke was highly mov'd  
 With a letter sent from Malfi. I do fear  
 Antonio is betray'd : how fearfully 80  
 Shows his ambition now ! unfortunate fortune !  
 They pass through whirl-pools, and deep woes do shun,  
 Who the event weigh ere the action's done. [Exit.

SCENE V. *Another apartment in the same palace*

*Enter CARDINAL and FERDINAND with a letter.*

*Ferd.* I have this night digg'd up a mandrake.  
*Card.* Say you ?  
*Ferd.* And I am grown mad with 't.  
*Card.* What's the prodigy ?  
*Ferd.* Read there,—a sister damn'd : she's loose  
 i' the hilts ;  
 Grown a notorious strumpet.  
*Card.* Speak lower.  
*Ferd.* Lower !  
 Rogues do not whisper 't now, but seek to publish 't  
 (As servants do the bounty of their lords)  
 Aloud ; and with a covetous searching eye,  
 To mark who note them. O, confusion seize her !  
 She hath had most cunning knaves to serve her turn,  
 And more secure conveyances for lust 10  
 Than towns of garrison for service.

*Card.* Is 't possible ?  
 Can this be certain ?

*Ferd.* Rhubarb, O, for rhubarb  
 To purge this choler ! here's the cursèd day  
 To prompt my memory ; and here 't shall stick  
 Till of her bleeding heart I make a sponge  
 To wipe it out.

*Card.* Why do you make yourself  
 So wild a tempest ?

*Ferd.*                   Would I could be one,  
That I might toss her palace 'bout her ears,  
Root up her goodly forests, blast her meads,  
And lay her general territory as waste  
As she hath done her honours.

20

*Card.* Shall our blood,  
The royal blood of Arragon and Castile,  
Be thus attainted?

*Ferd.* Apply desperate physic.  
We must not now use balsamum, but fire,  
The smarting cupping-glass, for that's the mean  
To purge infected blood, such blood as hers.  
There is a kind of pity in mine eye,—  
I'll give it to my handkercher ; and now 't is here,  
I'll bequeath this to her bastard.

*Card.* What to do?  
*Ferd.* Why, to make soft lint for his mother's  
wounds, 30  
When I have hew'd her to pieces.

*Ferd.* Foolish men,  
That e'er will trust their honour in a bark  
Made of so slight weak bulrush as is woman,  
Apt every minute to sink it !

Card. Thus ignorance, when it hath purchas'd honour,  
It cannot wield it.

*Ferd.* Methinks I see her laughing,—  
Excellent hyena! Talk to me somewhat quickly,  
Or my imagination will carry me  
To see her in the shameful act of sin.

40

*Card.* With whom?

*Ferd.* Happily with some strong-thigh'd bargeman,  
Or one o' the wood-yard that can quoit the sledge  
Or toss the bar, or else some lovely squire  
That carries coals up to her privy lodgings.

*Card.* How idly shows this rage, which carries you  
 As men convey'd by witches through the air,  
 On violent whirlwinds ! this intemperate noise  
 Fitly resembles deaf men's shrill discourse,  
 Who talk aloud, thinking all other men  
 To have their imperfection. 50

*Ferd.* Have not you  
 My palsy ?

*Card.* Yes, [but] I can be angry  
 Without this rupture : there is not in nature  
 A thing that makes man so deform'd, so beastly,  
 As doth intemperate anger. Chide yourself.  
 You have divers men who never yet express'd  
 Their strong desire of rest but by unrest,  
 By vexing of themselves. Come, put yourself  
 In tune.

*Ferd.* So I will only study to seem  
 The thing I am not. I could kill her now,  
 In you, or in myself ; for I do think  
 It is some sin in us heaven doth revenge  
 By her. 60

*Card.* Are you stark mad ?

*Ferd.* I would have their bodies  
 Burnt in a coal-pit with the vantage stopp'd,  
 That their curs'd smoke might not ascend to heaven ;  
 Or dip the sheets they lie in in pitch or sulphur,  
 Wrap them in 't, and then light them like a match.

*Card.* I 'll leave you.

*Ferd.* Nay, I have done.  
 I am confident, had I been damn'd in hell,  
 And should have heard of this, it would have put me  
 Into a cold sweat. In, in ; I 'll go sleep. 70  
 Till I know who mates my sister, I 'll not stir :  
 That known, I 'll find scorpions to string my whips,  
 And fix her in a general eclipse. [Exeunt.]

## ACT III.

SCENE I. *Malfi. An apartment in the palace of the DUCHESS.*

*Enter ANTONIO and DELIO.*

*Ant.* Our noble friend, my most belovèd Delio !  
O, you have been a stranger long at court :  
Came you along with the Lord Ferdinand ?

*Delio.* I did, sir : and how fares your noble duchess ?

*Ant.* Right fortunately well : she 's an excellent  
Feeder of pedigrees ; since you last saw her,  
She hath had two children more, a son and daughter.

*Delio.* Methinks 't was yesterday : let me but wink,  
And not behold your face, which to mine eye  
Is somewhat leaner, verily I should dream  
It were within this half hour.

*Ant.* You have not been in law, friend Delio,  
Nor in prison, nor a suitor at the court,  
Nor begg'd the reversion of some great man's place,  
Nor troubled with an old wife, which doth make  
Your time so insensibly hasten.

*Delio.* Pray, sir, tell me,  
Hath not this news arriv'd yet to the ear  
Of the lord cardinal ?

*Ant.* I fear it hath :  
The Lord Ferdinand, that 's newly come to court,  
Doth bear himself right dangerously.

*Delio.* Pray, why ? 20  
*Ant.* He is so quiet that he seems to sleep  
The tempest out, as dormice do in winter :  
Those houses that are haunted are most still  
Till the devil be up.

*Delio.* What say the common people ?

*Ant.* The common rabble do directly say

She is a strumpet.

*Delio.* And your graver heads  
Which would be politic, what censure they ?

*Ant.* They do observe I grow to infinite purchase,  
The left hand way ; and all suppose the duchess  
Would amend it, if she could ; for, say they, 30  
Great princes, though they grudge their officers  
Should have such large and unconfinèd means  
To get wealth under them, will not complain,  
Lest thereby they should make them odious  
Unto the people : for other obligation  
Of love or marriage between her and me  
They never dream of.

*Delio.* The Lord Ferdinand  
Is going to bed.

*Enter* DUCHESS, FERDINAND, *and* Attendants.

*Ferd.* I'll instantly to bed.  
For I am weary.—I am to bespeak  
A husband for you.

*Duch.* For me, sir ! pray, who is 't ? 40  
*Ferd.* The great Count Malatesti.

*Duch.* Fie upon him !  
A count ! he 's a mere stick of sugar-candy ;  
You may look quite through him. When I choose  
A husband, I will marry for your honour.

*Ferd.* You shall do well in 't.—How is 't, worthy  
Antonio ?

*Duch.* But, sir, I am to have private conference with  
you  
About a scandalous report is spread  
Touching mine honour.

*Ferd.* Let me ever be deaf to 't :  
One of Pasquil's paper-bullets, court-calumny,  
A pestilent air, which princes' palaces 50  
Are seldom purg'd of. Yet say that it were true,  
I pour it in your bosom, my fix'd love

Would strongly excuse, extenuate, nay, deny  
 Faults, were they apparent in you. Go, be safe  
 In your own innocence.

*Duch.* [Aside.] O bless'd comfort !  
 This deadly air is purg'd.

[*Exeunt DUCHESS, ANTONIO, DELIO, and Attendants.*]

*Ferd.* Her guilt treads on  
 Hot-burning coulters.

*Enter BOSOLA.*

Now, Bosola,  
 How thrives our intelligence ?

*Bos.* Sir, uncertainly :  
 'T is rumour'd she hath had three bastards, but  
 By whom we may go read i' the stars.

*Ferd.* Why, some 60  
 Hold opinion all things are written there.

*Bos.* Yes, if we could find spectacles to read them.  
 I do suspect there hath been some sorcery  
 Us'd on the duchess.

*Ferd.* Sorcery ! to what purpose ?  
*Bos.* To make her dote on some desertless fellow  
 She shames to acknowledge.

*Ferd.* Can your faith give way  
 To think there 's power in potions or in charms,  
 To make us love whether we will or no ?

*Bos.* Most certainly.

*Ferd.* Away ! these are mere gulleries, horrid things,  
 Invented by some cheating mountebanks 71  
 To abuse us. Do you think that herbs or charms  
 Can force the will ? Some trials have been made  
 In this foolish practice, but the ingredients  
 Were lenitive poisons, such as are of force  
 To make the patient mad ; and straight the witch  
 Swears by equivocation they are in love.  
 The witch-craft lies in her rank blood. This night  
 I will force confession from her. You told me

You had got, within these two days, a false key  
Into her bed-chamber.

*Bos.* I have.

*Ferd.* As I would wish.

*Bos.* What do you intend to do?

*Ferd.* Can you guess?

*Bos.* No.

*Ferd.* Do not ask, then :  
He that can compass me, and know my drifts,  
May say he hath put a girdle 'bout the world,  
And sounded all her quick-sands.

*Bos.* I do not

Think so.

*Ferd.* What do you think, then, pray?

*Bos.* That you are  
Your own chronicle too much, and grossly  
Flatter yourself.

*Ferd.* Give me thy hand ; I thank thee :  
I never gave pension but to flatterers,  
Till I entertained thee. Farewell. 90  
That friend a great man's ruin strongly checks,  
Who rails into his belief all his defects. [Exeunt.

SCENE II. *The bed-chamber of the DUCHESS in the same.*

Enter DUCHESS, ANTONIO, and CARIOLA.

*Duch.* Bring me the casket hither and the glass.—  
You get no lodging here to-night, my lord.

*Ant.* Indeed, I must persuade one.

*Duch.* Very good ;  
I hope in time 't will grow into a custom,  
That noblemen shall come with cap and knee  
To purchase a night's lodging of their wives.

*Ant.* I must lie here.

*Duch.* Must ! you are a lord of mis-rule.

*Ant.* Indeed, my rule is only in the night.

*Duch.* I'll stop your mouth. [Kisses him.

*Ant.* Nay, that's but one; Venus had two soft doves 10

To draw her chariot; I must have another.—

[She kisses him again.

When wilt thou marry, Cariola?

*Cari.* Never, my lord. •

*Ant.* O, fie upon this single life! forego it.

We read how Daphne, for her peevish flight,  
Became a fruitless bay-tree; Syrinx turn'd  
To the pale empty reed; Anaxarete  
Was frozen into marble: whereas those  
Which married, or prov'd kind unto their friends,  
Were by a gracious influence transhap'd  
Into the olive, pomegranate, mulberry,  
Became flowers, precious stones, or eminent stars. 20

*Cari.* This is a vain poetry: but I pray you, tell me,

If there were propos'd me wisdom, riches, and beauty  
In three several young men, which should I choose?

*Ant.* 'T is a hard question: this was Paris' case,  
And he was blind in 't, and there was a great cause;  
For how was 't possible he could judge right,  
Having three amorous goddesses in view,  
And they stark naked? 't was a motion  
Were able to benight the apprehension  
Of the severest counsellor of Europe. 30  
Now I look on both your faces so well form'd,  
It puts me in mind of a question I would ask.

*Cari.* What is 't?

*Ant.* I do wonder why hard-favour'd ladies,  
For the most part, keep worse-favour'd waiting-women  
To attend them, and cannot endure fair ones.

*Duch.* O, that's soon answer'd.

Did you ever in your life know an ill painter  
Desire to have his dwelling next door to the shop  
Of an excellent picture-maker? 't would disgrace 40

His face-making, and undo him. I prithee,  
When were we so merry?—My hair tangles.

*Ant.* Pray thee, Cariola, let's steal forth the room,  
And let her talk to herself: I have divers times  
Serv'd her the like, when she hath chaf'd extremely.  
I love to see her angry. Softly, Cariola.

[*Exeunt ANTONIO and CARIOLA.*

*Duch.* Doth not the colour of my hair 'gin to change?  
When I wax gray, I shall have all the court  
Powder their hair with arras, to be like me.  
You have cause to love me; I enter'd you into my heart  
Before you would vouchsafe to call for the keys. 51

*Enter FERDINAND behind.*

We shall one day have my brothers take you napping:  
Methinks his presence, being now in court,  
Should make you keep your own bed; but you'll say  
Love mix'd with fear is sweetest. I'll assure you,  
You shall get no more children till my brothers  
Consent to be your gossips. Have you lost your  
tongue?

'T is welcome:

For know, whether I am doom'd to live or die,  
I can do both like a prince.

*Ferd.* Die, then, quickly! 60

[*Giving her a poniard.*

Virtue, where art thou hid? what hideous thing  
Is it that doth eclipse thee?

*Duch.* Pray, sir, hear me.

*Ferd.* Or is it true thou art but a bare name,  
And no essential thing?

*Duch.* Sir—

*Ferd.* Do not speak.

*Duch.* No, sir: I will plant my soul in mine ears,  
to hear you.

*Ferd.* O most imperfect light of human reason,  
That mak'st us so unhappy to foresee

What we can least prevent ! Pursue thy wishes,  
And glory in them : there 's in shame no comfort  
But to be past all bounds and sense of shame. 70

*Duch.* I pray, sir, hear me : I am married.

*Ferd.* So !

*Duch.* Happily, not to your liking : but for that,  
Alas, your shears do come untimely now  
To clip the bird's wings that 's already flown !  
Will you see my husband ?

*Ferd.* Yes, if I could change  
Eyes with a basilisk.

*Duch.* Sure, you came hither  
By his confederacy.

*Ferd.* The howling of a wolf  
Is music to thee, screech-owl : prithee, peace.—  
Whate'er thou art that hast enjoy'd my sister,  
For I am sure thou hear'st me, for thine own sake 80  
Let me not know thee. I came hither prepar'd  
To work thy discovery ; yet am now persuaded  
It would beget such violent effects  
As would damn us both. I would not for ten millions  
I had beheld thee : therefore use all means  
I never may have knowledge of thy name ;  
Enjoy thy lust still, and a wretched life,  
On that condition.—And for thee, vile woman,  
If thou do wish thy paramour may grow old  
In thy embracements, I would have thee build  
Such a room for him as our anchorites  
To holier use inhabit. Let not the sun  
Shine on him till he 's dead ; let dogs and monkeys  
Only converse with him, and such dumb things  
To whom nature denies use to sound his name ;  
Do not keep a paraquito, lest she learn it ;  
If thou do love him, cut out thine own tongue,  
Lest it bewray him.

*Duch.* Why might not I marry ?  
I have not gone about in this to create  
Any new world or custom. 100

*Ferd.* Thou art undone ;  
And thou hast ta'en that massy sheet of lead  
That hid thy husband's bones, and folded it  
About my heart.

*Duch.* Mine bleeds for 't.

*Ferd.* Thine ! thy heart !  
What should I name 't unless a hollow bullet  
Fill'd with unquenchable wild-fire ?

*Duch.* You are in this  
Too strict ; and were you not my princely brother,  
I would say, too wilful : my reputation  
Is safe.

*Ferd.* Dost thou know what reputation is ? 110  
I'll tell thee,—to small purpose, since the instruction  
Comes now too late.  
Upon a time Reputation, Love, and Death,  
Would travel o'er the world ; and it was concluded  
That they should part, and take three several ways.  
Death told them, they should find him in great battles,  
Or cities plagu'd with plagues : Love gives them counsel  
To inquire for him 'mongst unambitious shepherds,  
Where dowries were not talk'd of, and sometimes  
'Mongst quiet kindred that had nothing left 120  
By their dead parents : 'Stay,' quoth Reputation,  
'Do not forsake me ; for it is my nature,  
If once I part from any man I meet,  
I am never found again.' And so for you :  
You have shook hands with Reputation,  
And made him invisible. So, fare you well :  
I will never see you more.

*Duch.* Why should only I,  
Of all the other princes of the world,  
Be cas'd up, like a holy relic ? I have youth  
And a little beauty.

*Ferd.* So you have some virgins 130  
That are witches. I will never see thee more. [Exit.

*Re-enter ANTONIO with a pistol, and CARIOLA.*

*Duch.* You saw this apparition ?

*Ant.* Yes : we are  
Betray'd. How came he hither ? I should turn  
This to thee, for that.

*Cari.* Pray, sir, do ; and when  
That you have cleft my heart, you shall read there  
Mine innocence.

*Duch.* That gallery gave him entrance.

*Ant.* I would this terrible thing would come again,  
That, standing on my guard, I might relate  
My warrantable love.— [She shows the poniard.

Ha ! what means this ?

*Duch.* He left this with me.

*Ant.* And it seems did wish  
You would use it on yourself.

*Duch.* His action seem'd 141  
To intend so much.

*Ant.* This hath a handle to 't,  
As well as a point : turn it towards him,  
And so fasten the keen edge in his rank gall.

[Knocking within.]

How now ! who knocks ? more earthquakes ?

*Duch.* I stand  
As if a mine beneath my feet were ready  
To be blown up.

*Cari.* 'T is Bosola.

*Duch.* Away !  
O misery ! methinks unjust actions  
Should wear these masks and curtains, and not we.  
You must instantly part hence : I have fashion'd it  
already. [Exit ANTONIO.

Enter BOSOLA.

*Bos.* The duke your brother is ta'en up in a whirlwind ; 151

Hath took horse, and 's rid post to Rome.

*Duch.* So late ?

*Bos.* He told me, as he mounted into the saddle,  
You were undone.

*Duch.* Indeed, I am very near it.

*Bos.* What 's the matter ?

*Duch.* Antonio, the master of our household,  
Hath dealt so falsely with me in 's accounts :  
My brother stood engag'd with me for money  
Ta'en up of certain Neapolitan Jews,  
And Antonio lets the bonds be forfeit.

160

*Bos.* Strange !—[*Aside.*] This is cunning.

*Duch.* And hereupon  
My brother's bills at Naples are protested  
Against.—Call up our officers.

*Bos.* I shall.

[*Exit.*]

*Re-enter* ANTONIO.

*Duch.* The place that you must fly to is Ancona :  
Hire a house there ; I 'll send after you  
My treasure and my jewels. Our weak safety  
Runs up enginous wheels : short syllables  
Must stand for periods. I must now accuse you  
Of such a feignèd crime as Tasso calls  
*Magnanima menzogna*, a noble lie, 170  
'Cause it must shield our honours.—Hark ! they are  
coming.

*Re-enter* BOSOLA and Officers.

*Ant.* Will your grace hear me ?

*Duch.* I have got well by you ; you have yielded  
me  
A million of loss : I am like to inherit  
The people's curses for your stewardship.  
You had the trick in audit-time to be sick,  
Till I had signed your quietus ; and that cur'd you  
Without help of the doctor.—Gentlemen,  
I would have this man be an example to you all ;

So shall you hold my favour ; I pray, let him ; 180  
 For h'as done that, alas, you would not think of,  
 And, because I intend to be rid of him,  
 I mean not to publish.—Use your fortune elsewhere.

*Ant.* I am strongly arm'd to brook my overthrow,  
 As commonly men bear with a hard year :  
 I will not blame the cause on 't ; but do think  
 The necessity of my malevolent star .  
 Procures this, not her humour. O, the inconstant  
 And rotten ground of service ! you may see,  
 'T is even like him, that in a winter night, 190  
 Takes a long slumber o'er a dying fire,  
 A-loth to part from 't ; yet parts thence as cold  
 As when he first sat down.

*Duch.* We do confiscate,  
 Towards the satisfying of your accounts,  
 All that you have.

*Ant.* I am all yours ; and 't is very fit  
 All mine should be so.

*Duch.* So, sir, you have your pass.

*Ant.* You may see, gentlemen, what 't is to serve  
 A prince with body and soul. [Exit.

*Bos.* Here's an example for extortion : what  
 moisture is drawn out of the sea, when foul weather  
 comes pours down, and runs into the sea again. 201

*Duch.* I would know what are your opinions of this  
 Antonio.

*2nd Off.* He could not abide to see a pig's  
 head gaping : I thought your grace would find him  
 a Jew.

*3rd Off.* I would you had been his officer, for  
 your own sake.

*4th Off.* You would have had more money.

*1st Off.* He stopped his ears with black wool, and  
 to those came to him for money said he was thick  
 of hearing. 211

*2nd Off.* Some said he was an hermaphrodite, for  
 he could not abide a woman.

*4th Off.* How scurvy proud he would look when the treasury was full ! Well, let him go.

*1st Off.* Yes, and the chippings of the buttery fly after him, to scour his gold chain.

*Duch.* Leave us. [*Exeunt* Officers.

What do you think of these ?

*Bos.* That these are rogues that in 's prosperity, But to have waited on his fortune, could have wish'd His dirty stirrup riveted through their noses, 221 And follow'd after 's mule, like a bear in a ring ; Would have sacrificed their daughters to his lust, Made their first-born intelligencers ; thought none happy But such as were born under his blest planet, And wore his livery : and do these lice drop off now ? Well, never look to have the like again : He hath left a sort of flattering rogues behind him ; Their doom must follow. Princes pay flatterers In their own money : flatterers dissemble their vices, And they dissemble their lies ; that 's justice. 231 Alas, poor gentleman !

*Duch.* Poor ! he hath simply fill'd his coffers.

*Bos.* Sure, he was too honest. Pluto, the god of riches, When he 's sent by Jupiter to any man, He goes limping, to signify that wealth That comes on God's name comes slowly ; but when he 's sent On the devil's errand, he rides post and comes in by scuttles.

Let me show you what a most unvalued jewel You have in a wanton humour thrown away, 240 To bless the man shall find him. He was an excellent Courtier and most faithful ; a soldier that thought it As beastly to know his own value too little As devilish to acknowledge it too much. Both his virtue and form deserv'd a far better fortune : His discourse rather delighted to judge itself than show itself :

His breast was filled with all perfections,  
And yet it seemed a private whispering-room,  
It made so little noise of 't.

*Duch.* But he was basely descended.

250

*Bos.* Will you make yourself a mercenary herald,  
Rather to examine men's pedigrees than virtues ?  
You shall want him :

For know an honest statesman to a prince  
Is like a cedar planted by a spring ;  
The spring bathes the tree's root, the grateful tree  
Rewards it with his shadow : you have not done so.  
I would sooner swim to the Bermoothes on  
Two politicians' rotten bladders, tied  
Together with an intelligencer's heart-string,      260  
Than depend on so changeable a prince's favour.  
Fare thee well, Antonio ! since the malice of the world  
Would needs down with thee, it cannot be said yet  
That any ill happen'd unto thee, considering thy fall  
Was accompanied with virtue.

*Duch.* O, you render me excellent music !

*Bos.*      Say you ?

*Duch.* This good one that you speak of is my hus-  
band.

*Bos.* Do I not dream ? can this ambitious age  
Have so much goodness in 't as to prefer  
A man merely for worth, without these shadows      270  
Of wealth and painted honours ? possible ?

*Duch.* I have had three children by him.

*Bos.* Fortunate lady !

For you have made your private nuptial bed  
The humble and fair seminary of peace.  
No question but many an unbenefic'd scholar  
Shall pray for you for this deed, and rejoice  
That some preferment in the world can yet  
Arise from merit. The virgins of your land  
That have no dowries shall hope your example  
Will raise them to rich husbands. Should you want  
Soldiers, 't would make the very Turks and Moors 281

Turn Christians, and serve you for this act.  
 Last, the neglected poets of your time,  
 In honour of this trophy of a man,  
 Rais'd by that curious engine, your white hand,  
 Shall thank you, in your grave, for 't ; and make that  
 More reverend than all the cabinets  
 Of living princes. For Antonio,  
 His fame shall likewise flow from many a pen,  
 When heralds shall want coats to sell to men. 290

*Duch.* As I taste comfort in this friendly speech,  
 So would I find concealment.

*Bos.* O, the secret of my prince,  
 Which I will wear on the inside of my heart !

*Duch.* You shall take charge of all my coin and  
 jewels,  
 And follow him ; for he retires himself  
 To Ancona.

*Bos.* So.

*Duch.* Whither, within few days,  
 I mean to follow thee.

*Bos.* Let me think :  
 I would wish your grāce to feign a pilgrimage  
 To our Lady of Loretto, scarce seven leagues  
 From fair Ancona ; so may you depart  
 Your country with more honour, and your flight  
 Will seem a princely progress, retaining  
 Your usual train about you. 300

*Duch.* Sir, your direction  
 Shall lead me by the hand.

*Cari.* In my opinion,  
 She were better progress to the baths at Lucca,  
 Or go visit the Spa  
 In Germany ; for, if you will believe me,  
 I do not like this jesting with religion,  
 This feigned pilgrimage. 310

*Duch.* Thou art a superstitious fool :  
 Prepare us instantly for our departure.  
 Past sorrows, let us moderately lament them,

For those to come, seek wisely to prevent them.

[*Exeunt* DUCHESS and CARIOLA.]

Bos. A politician is the devil's quilted anvil :  
He fashions all sins on him, and the blows  
Are never heard : he may work in a lady's chamber,  
As here for proof. What rests but I reveal  
All to my lord ? O, this base quality  
Of intelligencer ! why, every quality i' the world      '320  
Prefers but gain or commendation :  
Now, for this act I am certain to be rais'd,  
And men that paint weeds to the life are prais'd. [Exit.]

SCENE III. *An apartment in the CARDINAL's palace  
at Rome.*

*Enter CARDINAL, FERDINAND, MALATESTI, PESCARA,  
DELIO, and SILVIO.*

*Card.* Must we turn soldier, then?

*Mal.* The same.  
Here's a plot drawn for a new fortification  
At Naples.

Ferd. This great Count Malatesti, I perceive,  
Hath got employment?

*Delio.* No employment, my lord; 10  
A marginal note in the muster-book, that he is  
A voluntary lord.

*Ferd.* He's no soldier.

*Delio.* He has worn gun-powder in 's hollow tooth  
for the tooth-ache.

*Sil.* He comes to the leaguer with a full intent  
To eat fresh beef and garlic, means to stay  
Till the scent be gone, and straight return to court.

*Delio.* He hath read all the late service  
As the City-Chronicle relates it.;  
And keeps two pewterers going, only to express  
Battles in model.

*Sil.* Then he 'll fight by the book.

20

*Delio.* By the almanac, I think,  
To choose good days and shun the critical ;  
That 's his mistress' scarf.

*Sil.* Yes, he protests  
He would do much for that taffeta.

*Delio.* I think he would run away from a battle,  
To save it from taking prisoner.

*Sil.* He is horribly afraid  
Gun-powder will spoil the perfume on 't.

*Delio.* I saw a Dutchman break his pate once  
For calling him pot-gun ; he made his head  
Have a bore in 't like a musket.

30

*Sil.* I would he had made a touch-hole to 't.  
He is indeed a guarded Sumpter-cloth,  
Only for the remove of the court.

*Enter* BOSOLA.

*Pes.* Bosola arriv'd ! what should be the business ?  
Some falling-out amongst the cardinals.

These factions amongst great men, they are like  
Foxes, when their heads are divided,  
They carry fire in their tails, and all the country  
About then goes to wreck for 't.

38

*Sil.* What 's that Bosola ?

*Delio.* I knew him in Padua,—a fantastical scholar,  
like such who study to know how many knots was in  
Hercules' club, of what colour Achilles' beard was, or  
whether Hector were not troubled with the tooth-ache.  
He hath studied himself half blear-eyed to know the true

symmetry of Cæsar's nose by a shoeing-horn ; and this he did to gain the name of a speculative man.

*Pes.* Mark Prince Ferdinand :  
A very salamander lives in 's eye,  
To mock the eager violence of fire.

*Sil.* That cardinal hath made more bad faces with his oppression than ever Michael Angelo made good ones : he lifts up 's nose, like a foul porpoise before a storm. 49

*Pes.* The Lord Ferdinand laughs.

*Delio.* Like a deadly cannon  
That lightens ere it smokes.

*Pes.* These are your true pangs of death,  
The pangs of life, that struggle with great statesmen.

*Delio.* In such a deformed silence whisper witches  
Their charms.

*Card.* Doth she make religion her riding-hood  
To keep her from the sun and tempest ?

*Ferd.* That, 60  
That damns her. Methinks her fault and beauty,  
Blended together, show like leprosy,  
The whiter, the fouler. I make it a question  
Whether her beggarly brats were ever christen'd.

*Card.* I will instantly solicit the state of Ancona  
To have them banish'd.

*Ferd.* You are for Loretto ?  
I shall not be at your ceremony ; fare you well.—  
Write to the Duke of Malfi, my young nephew  
She had by her first husband, and acquaint him  
With 's mother's honesty.

*Bos.* I will.

*Ferd.* Antonio ! 70  
A slave that only smell'd of ink and counters,  
And never in 's life look'd like a gentleman,  
But in the audit-time.—Go, go presently,  
Draw me out an hundred and fifty of our horse,  
And meet me at the foot-bridge.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. *Enter Two Pilgrims to the Shrine of our Lady of Loretto.*

*1st Pil.* I have not seen a goodlier shrine than this ;  
Yet I have visited many.

*2nd Pil.* The Cardinal of Arragon  
Is this day to resign his cardinal's hat :  
His sister duchess likewise is arriv'd  
To pay her vow of pilgrimage. I expect  
A noble ceremony.

*1st Pil.* No question.—They come.

[*Here the ceremony of the CARDINAL'S instalment, in the habit of a soldier, performed in delivering up his cross, hat, robes, and ring, at the shrine, and investing him with sword, helmet, shield, and spurs ; then ANTONIO, the DUCHESS, and their Children, having presented themselves at the shrine, are, by a form of banishment in dumb-show expressed towards them by the CARDINAL and the State of Ancona, banished : during all which ceremony, this ditty is sung, to very solemn music, by divers Churchmen : and then exeunt all except the Two Pilgrims.*

### SONG.

Arms and honours deck thy story,  
To thy fame's eternal glory !  
Adverse fortune ever fly thee ;  
No disastrous fate come nigh thee !  
I alone will sing thy praises,  
Whom to honour virtue raises,  
And thy study, that divine is,  
Bent to martial discipline is,  
Lay aside all those robes lie by thee ;  
Crown thy arts with arms, they 'll beautify thee.

*O worthy of worthiest name, adorn'd in this manner,  
 Lead bravely thy forces on under war's warlike banner !  
 O, mayst thou prove fortunate in all martial courses !  
 Guide thou still by skill in art and forces !* 20  
*Victory attend thee nigh, whilst fame sings loud thy powers ;  
 Triumphant conquest crown thy head, and blessings pour  
 down showers !*

*1st Pil.* Here's a strange turn of state ! who would have thought

So great a lady would have match'd herself  
 Unto so mean a person ? yet the cardinal  
 Bears himself much too cruel.

*2nd Pil.* They are banish'd.

*1st Pil.* But I would ask what power hath this state  
 Of Ancona to determine of a free prince ?

*2nd Pil.* They are a free state, sir, and her brother show'd  
 How that the Pope, fore-hearing of her looseness, 30  
 Hath seiz'd into the protection of the church  
 The dukedom which she held as 'dowager.

*1st Pil.* But by what justice ?

*2nd Pil.* Sure, I think by none,  
 Only her brother's instigation.

*1st Pil.* What was it with such violence he took  
 Off from her finger ?

*2nd Pil.* 'T was her wedding-ring ;  
 Which he vow'd shortly he would sacrifice  
 To his revenge.

*1st Pil.* Alas, Antonio !  
 If that a man be thrust into a well,  
 No matter who sets hand to 't, his own weight 40  
 Will bring him sooner to the bottom. Come, let's hence.  
 Fortune makes this conclusion general,  
 All things do help the unhappy man to fall. [Exeunt.

SCENE V. *Near Loretto.*

*Enter* DUCHESS, ANTONIO, Children, CARIOLA, and Servants.

*Duch.* Banish'd Ancona !

*Ant.* Yes, you see what power  
Lightens in great men's breath.

*Duch.* Is all our train  
Shrunk to this poor remainder ?

*Ant.* These poor men,  
Which have got little in your service, vow  
To take your fortune : but your wiser buntlings,  
Now they are fledg'd, are gone.

*Duch.* They have done wisely.  
This puts me in mind of death : physicians thus,  
With their hands full of money, use to give o'er  
Their patients.

*Ant.* Right the fashion of the world :  
From decay'd fortunes every flatterer shrinks ; 10  
Men cease to build wher'z the foundation sinks.

*Duch.* I had a very strange dream to-night.

*Ant.* What was 't ?

*Duch.* Methought I wore my coronet of state,  
And on a sudden all the diamonds  
Were chang'd to pearls.

*Ant.* My interpretation  
Is, you 'll weep shortly ; for to me the pearls  
Do signify your tears.

*Duch.* The birds that live i' the field  
On the wild benefit of nature live  
Happier than we : for they may choose their mates,  
And carol their sweet pleasures to the spring. 20

*Enter* BOSOLA with a letter.

*Bos.* You are happily o'erta'en.

*Duch.* From my brother ?

*Bos.* Yes, from the Lord Ferdinand your brother  
All love and safety.

*Duch.* Thou dost blanch mischief,  
Would'st make it white. See, see, like to calm weather  
At sea before a tempest, false hearts speak fair  
To those they intend most mischief. [Reads.]

'Send ANTONIO to me ; I want his head in a business.'  
A politic equivocation !

He doth not want your counsel, but your head ;  
That is, he cannot sleep till you be dead.

30

And here's another pitfall that's strew'd over

With roses ; mark it, 't is a cunning one : [Reads.]

'I stand engaged for your husband for several debts  
at Naples ; let not that trouble him ; I had rather  
have his heart than his money' :—

And I believe so too.

*Bos.* What do you believe ?

*Duch.* That he so much distrusts my husband's love,  
He will by no means believe his heart is with him  
Until he see it : the devil is not cunning enough  
To circumvent us in riddles.

40

*Bos.* Will you reject that noble and free league  
Of amity and love which I present you ?

*Duch.* Their league is like that of some politic kings,  
Only to make themselves of strength and power  
To be our after-ruin ; tell them so.

*Bos.* And what from you ?

*Ant.* Thus tell him ; I will not come.

*Bos.* And what of this ?

*Ant.* My brothers have dispers'd  
Bloodhounds abroad ; which till I hear are muzzled,  
No truce, though hatch'd with ne'er such politic skill,  
Is safe, that hangs upon our enemies' will.  
I'll not come at them.

50

*Bos.* This proclaims your breeding :  
Every small thing draws a base mind to fear,  
As the adamant draws iron. Fare you well, sir :  
You shall shortly hear from 's. [Exit.]

*Duch.* I suspect some ambush :  
Therefore by all my love I do conjure you  
To take your eldest son, and fly towards Milan.  
Let us not venture all this poor remainder  
In one unlucky bottom.

*Ant.* You counsel safely.  
Best of my life, farewell, since we must part :  
Heaven hath a hand in 't ; but no otherwise  
Than as some curious artist takes in sunder  
A clock or watch, when it is out of frame,  
To bring 't in better order.

*Duch.* I know not which is best,  
To see you dead, or part with you.—Farewell, boy :  
Thou art happy that thou hast not understanding  
To know thy misery ; for all our wit  
And reading brings us to a truer sense  
Of sorrow.—In the eternal church, sir,  
I do hope we shall not part thus.

*Ant.* O, be of comfort !  
Make patience a noble fortitude,  
And think not how unkindly we are us'd ;  
Man, like to cassia, is prov'd best, being bruis'd.

*Duch.* Must I, like to a slave-born Russian,  
Account it praise to suffer tyranny ?  
And yet, O heaven, thy heavy hand is in 't !  
I have seen my little boy oft scourge his top,  
And compared myself to 't : naught made me e'er  
Go right but heaven's scourge-stick.

*Ant.* Do not weep :  
Heaven fashion'd us of nothing ; and we strive 80  
To bring ourselves to nothing.—Farewell, Cariola,  
And thy sweet armful.—If I do never see thee more,  
Be a good mother to your little ones,  
And save them from the tiger : fare you well.

*Duch.* Let me look upon you once more, for that  
speech  
Came from a dying father : your kiss is colder  
Than that I have seen an holy anchorite

Give to a dead man's skull.

*Ant.* My heart is turn'd to a heavy lump of lead,  
With which I sound my danger : fare you well. 90

[*Exeunt ANTONIO and his son.*]

*Duch.* My laurel is all wither'd.

*Cari.* Look, madam, what a troop of armed men  
Make toward us !

*Duch.* O, they are very welcome :  
When Fortune's wheel is over-charg'd with princes,  
The weight makes it move swift : I would have my ruin  
Be sudden.

*Re-enter BOSOLA visarded, with a Guard.*

I am your adventure, am I not ?

*Bos.* You are : you must see your husband no more.

*Duch.* What devil art thou that counterfeit'st  
heaven's thunder ?

*Bos.* Is that terrible ? I would have you tell me  
whether

Is that note worse that frights the silly birds 100  
Out of the corn, or that which doth allure them  
To the nets ? you have hearken'd to the last too much.

*Duch.* O misery ! like a rusty o'ercharg'd cannon,  
Shall I never fly in pieces ?—Come, to what prison ?

*Bos.* To none.

*Duch.* Whither, then ?

*Bos.* To your palace.

*Duch.* I have heard  
That Charon's boat serves to convey all o'er  
The dismal lake, but brings none back again.

*Bos.* Your brothers mean you safety and pity.

*Duch.* Pity !

With such a pity men preserve alive  
Pheasants and quails, when they are not fat enough 110  
To be eaten.

*Bos.* These are your children ?

*Duch.* Yes.

*Bos.*

Can they prattle?

*Duch.* No:

But I intend, since they were born accurs'd,  
 Curses shall be their first language.

*Bos.*

Fie, madam!

Forget this base, low fellow——

*Duch.*

Were I a man,  
 I 'd beat that counterfeit face into thy other.

*Bos.* One of no birth.*Duch.*

Say that he was born mean,  
 Man is most happy when 's own actions  
 Be arguments and examples of his virtue.

*Bos.* A barren, beggarly virtue.

120

*Duch.* I prithee, who is greatest? can you tell?  
 Sad tales befit my woe: I 'll tell you one.

A salmon, as she swam unto the sea,  
 Met with a dog-fish, who encounters her  
 With this rough language; 'Why art thou so bold  
 To mix thyself with our high state of floods,

Being no eminent courtier, but one

That for the calmest and fresh time o' the year  
 Dost live in shallow rivers, rank'st thyself

With silly smelts and shrimps? and darest thou 130  
 Pass by our dog-ship without reverence?

'O,' quoth the salmon, 'sister, be at peace:

Thank Jupiter we both have pass'd the net!

Our value never can be truly known

Till in the fisher's basket we be shown:

I' the market then my price may be the higher,

Even when I am nearest to the cook and fire.'

So to great men the moral may be stretch'd;

Men oft are valu'd high, when they 're most wretched.—

But come, whither you please. I am arm'd 'gainst  
 misery;

140

Bent to all sways of the oppressor's will:

There's no deep valley but near some great hill. [Exeunt.

## ACT IV.

SCENE I. *Malfi. An apartment in the palace of the DUCHESS.*

*Enter FERDINAND and BOSOLA.*

*Ferd.* How doth our sister duchess bear herself  
In her imprisonment ?

*Bos.* Nobly : I 'll describe her,  
She 's sad as one long us'd to 't, and she seems  
Rather to welcome the end of misery  
Than shun it ; a behaviour so noble  
As gives a majesty to adversity :  
You may discern the shape of loveliness  
More perfect in her tears than in her smiles :  
She will muse for hours together ; and her silence,  
Methinks, expresseth more than if she spake.

10

*Ferd.* Her melancholy seems to be fortified  
With a strange disdain.

*Bos.* 'T is so ; and this restraint,  
Like English mastives that grow fierce with tying,  
Makes her too passionately apprehend  
Those pleasures she 's kept from.

*Ferd.* Curse upon her !  
I will no longer study in the book  
Of another's heart. Inform her what I told you. [Exit.

*Enter DUCHESS.*

*Bos.* All comfort to your grace !

*Duch.* I will have none.  
Pray thee, why dost thou wrap thy poison'd pills  
In gold and sugar ?

20

*Bos.* Your elder brother, the Lord Ferdinand,  
Is come to visit you, and sends you word,

'Cause once he rashly made a solemn vow  
 Never to see you more, he comes i' the night ;  
 And prays you gently neither torch nor taper  
 Shine in your chamber : he will kiss your hand,  
 And reconcile himself ; but for his vow  
 He dares not see you.

*Duch.* At his pleasure.—  
 Take hence the lights.—He's come.

*Enter FERDINAND.*

*Ferd.* Where are you ?

*Duch.* Here, sir.

*Ferd.* This darkness suits you well.

*Duch.* I would ask you pardon.

*Ferd.* You have it ; 31

For I account it the honourabl'st revenge,

Where I may kill, to pardon.—Where are your cubs ?

*Duch.* Whom ?

*Ferd.* Call them your children :  
 For though our national law distinguish bastards  
 From true legitimate issue, compassionate nature  
 Makes them all equal.

*Duch.* Do you visit me for this ?  
 You violate a sacrament o' the church  
 Shall make you howl in hell for 't.

*Ferd.* It had been well,  
 Could you have liv'd thus always ; for, indeed, 40  
 You were too much i' the light :—but no more ;  
 I come to seal my peace with you. Here's a hand

[*Gives her a dead man's hand.* To which you have vow'd much love ; the ring upon 't  
 You gave.

*Duch.* I affectionately kiss it.

*Ferd.* Pray, do, and bury the print of it in your  
 heart.  
 I will leave this ring with you for a love-token ;  
 And the hand as sure as the ring ; and do not doubt

But you shall have the heart too : when you need a friend,

Send it to him that ow'd it ; you shall see  
Whether he can aid you.

Duch. You are very cold : 50  
I fear you are not well after your travel.--  
Ha ! lights !—O, horrible !

Ferd. Let her have lights enough. [Exit.

Duch. What witchcraft doth he practise, that he hath left

A dead man's hand here.

[*Here is discovered, behind a traverse, the artificial figures of ANTONIO and his Children, appearing as if they were dead.*

Bos. Look you, here's the piece from which 't was ta'en.

He doth present you this sad spectacle,  
That, now you know directly they are dead,  
Hereafter you may wisely cease to grieve  
For that which cannot be recoverèd. 60

Duch. There is not between heaven and earth one wish

I stay for after this : it wastes me more  
Than were 't my picture, fashion'd out of wax,  
Stuck with a magical needle, and then buried  
In some foul dunghill ; and yond's an excellent property  
For a tyrant, which I would account mercy.

Bos. What's that ?

Duch. If they would bind me to that lifeless trunk,  
And let me freeze to death.

Bos. Come, you must live.

Duch. That's the greatest torture souls feel in hell,  
In hell, that they must live, and cannot die. 70  
Portia, I'll new kindle thy coals again,  
And revive the rare and almost dead example  
Of a loving wife.

Bos. O, fie ! despair ? remember  
You are a Christian.

*Duch.* The church enjoins fasting :  
I'll starve myself to death.

*Bos.* Leave this vain sorrow.  
Things being at the worst begin to mend : the bee  
When he hath shot his sting into your hand,  
May then play with your eye-lid.

*Duch.* Good comfortable fellow,  
Persuade a wretch that 's broke upon the wheel  
To have all his bones new set ; entreat him live 80  
To be executed again. Who must despatch me ?  
I account this world a tedious theatre,  
For I do play a part in 't 'gainst my will.

*Bos.* Come, be of comfort ; I will save your life.

*Duch.* Indeed, I have not leisure to tend so small  
a business.

*Bos.* Now, by my life, I pity you.

*Duch.* Thou art a fool, then,  
To waste thy pity on a thing so wretched  
I cannot pity itself. I am full of daggers.  
Puff, let me blow these vipers from me.

*Enter Servant.*

What are you ?

*Serv.* One that wishes you long life. 90  
*Duch.* I would thou wert hang'd for the horrible curse  
Thou hast given me : I shall shortly grow one  
Of the miracles of pity. I'll go pray ;—  
No, I'll go curse.

*Bos.* O, fie !

*Duch.* I could curse the stars.

*Bos.* O, fearful !

*Duch.* And those three smiling seasons of the year  
Into a Russian winter : nay, the world  
To its first chaos.

*Bos.* Look you, the stars shine still.

*Duch.* O, but you must  
Remember, my curse hath a great way to go.—

Plagues, that make lanes through largest families, 100  
Consume them!—

*Bos.* Fie, lady!

*Duch.* Let them, like tyrants,  
Never be remember'd but for the ill they have done;  
Let all the zealous prayers of mortified  
Churchmen forget them!—

*Bos.* O, uncharitable!

*Duch.* Let heaven a little while cease crowning  
martyrs,  
To punish them!—  
Go, howl them this, and say, I long to bleed:  
It is some mercy when men kill with speed. [Exit.

*Re-enter* FERDINAND.

*Ferd.* Excellent, as I would wish; she's plagu'd in  
art:

These presentations are but fram'd in wax  
By the curious master in that quality,  
Vincentio Lauriola, and she takes them  
For true substantial bodies.

*Bos.* Why do you do this?

*Ferd.* To bring her to despair.

*Bos.* Faith, end here,

And go no farther in your cruelty:  
Send her a penitential garment to put on  
Next to her delicate skin, and furnish her  
With beads and prayer-books.

*Ferd.* Damn her! that body of hers,  
While that my blood ran pure in 't, was more worth  
Than that which thou wouldest comfort, call'd a soul.

I will send her masks of common courtezans, 121  
Have her meat serv'd up by rogues and ruffians,  
And, 'cause she 'll needs be mad, I am resolv'd  
To move forth the common hospital  
All the mad-folk, and place them near her lodging;  
There let them practise together, sing and dance,

And act their gambols to the full o' the moon :  
If she can sleep the better for it, let her.  
Your work is almost ended.

Ferd. Yes.

*Bos.*      *Never.*

*Ferd.* You must.

That's forfeited by my intelligence 131  
And this last cruel lie: when you send me next,  
The business shall be comfort.

*Ferd.* Very likely;

Thy pity is nothing of kin to thee. Antonio

Lurks about Milan: thou shalt shortly thither,

To feed a fire as great as my revenge,

Which never will slack till it hath spent his fuel:

Intemperate agues make physicians cruel. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II. *Another room in the lodging of the DUCHESS.*

*Enter DUCHESS and CARIOLA.*

*Duch.* What hideous noise was that?

Cari. 'Tis the wild consort

Of madmen, lady, which your tyrant brother

Hath plac'd about your lodging: this tyranny,

I think, was never practis'd till this hour.

*Duch.* Indeed, I thank him: nothing but noise and folly

Can keep me in my right wits ; whereas reason

And silence make me stark mad. Sit down :

And suffice make me stark mad. — Give  
Discourse to me some dismal tragedy.

Cari. O, 't will increase your melancholy !

*Duch.* Thou art deceiv'd:

To hear of greater grief would lessen mine.

This is a prison?

*Cari.* Yes, but you shall live  
To shake this durance off.

*Duch.* Thou art a fool :  
The robin-red-breast and the nightingale  
Never live long in cages.

*Cari.* Pray, dry your eyes.  
What think you of, madam ?

*Duch.* Of nothing ;  
When I muse thus, I sleep.

*Cari.* Like a madman, with your eyes open ?

*Duch.* Dost thou think we shall know one another  
In the other world ?

*Cari.* Yes, out of question.

*Duch.* O, that it were possible we might 20  
But hold some two days' conference with the dead !  
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,  
I never shall know here. I 'll tell thee a miracle ;  
I am not mad yet, to my cause of sorrow :  
The heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,  
The earth of flaming sulphur, yet I am not mad.  
I am acquainted with sad misery  
As the tann'd galley-slave is with his oar ;  
Necessity makes me suffer constantly,  
And custom makes it easy. Who do I look like now ?

*Cari.* Like to your picture in the gallery, 31  
A deal of life in show, but none in practice ;  
Or rather like some reverend monument  
Whose ruins are even pitied.

*Duch.* Very proper ;  
And Fortune seems only to have her eye-sight  
To behold my tragedy.—How now !  
What noise is that ?

*Enter Servant.*

*Serv.* I am come to tell you  
Your brother hath intended you some sport.  
A great physician, when the Pope was sick

Of a deep melancholy, presented him  
 With several sorts of madmen, which wild object  
 Being full of change and sport, forc'd him to laugh,  
 And so the imposthume broke: the self-same cure  
 The duke intends on you.

*Duch.* Let them come in.

*Serv.* There 's a mad lawyer; and a secular priest;  
 A doctor that hath forfeited his wits  
 By jealousy; an astrologian  
 That in his works said such a day o' the month  
 Should be the day of doom, and, failing of 't,  
 Ran mad; an English tailor craz'd i' the brain      50  
 With the study of new fashions; a gentleman-usher  
 Quite beside himself with care to keep in mind  
 The number of his lady's salutations  
 Or 'How do you' she employ'd him in each morn-  
 ing;  
 A farmer, too, an excellent knave in grain,  
~~ME~~'cause he was hinder'd transportation:  
 And let one broker that 's mad loose to these,  
 You 'd think the devil were among them.

*Duch.* Sit, Cariola.—Let them loose when you  
 please,  
 For I am chain'd to endure all your tyranny.      60

*Enter Madmen.*

*Here by a Madman this song is sung to a dismal kind of  
 music.*

*O, let us howl some heavy note,  
 Some deadly dogg'd howl,  
 Sounding as from the threatening throat  
 Of beasts and fatal fowl!  
 As ravens, screech-owls, bulls, and bears,  
 We 'll bell, and bawl our parts,  
 Till irksome noise have cloy'd your ears  
 And corroborisiv'd your hearts*

*At last, whenas our quire wants breath,  
Our bodies being blest,  
We'll sing, like swans, to welcome death,  
And die in love and rest.*

70

*1st Madman.* Doom's-day not come yet ! I 'll draw it nearer by a perspective, or make a glass that shall set all the world on fire upon an instant. I cannot sleep ; my pillow is stuffed with a litter of porcupines.

*2nd Madman.* Hell is a mere glass-house, where the devils are continually blowing up women's souls on hollow irons, and the fire never goes out.

*1st Madman.* I have skill in heraldry. 80

*2nd Madman.* Hast ?

*1st Madman.* You do give for your crest a woodcock's head with the brains picked out on 't ; you are a very ancient gentleman.

*3rd Madman.* Greek is turned Turk : we are only to be saved by the Helvetian translation.

*1st Madman.* Come on, sir, I will lay the law to you.

*2nd Madman.* O, rather lay a corrosive : the law will eat to the bone. 90

*3rd Madman.* He that drinks but to satisfy nature is damned.

*4th Madman.* If I had my glass here, I would show a sight should make all the women here call me mad doctor.

*1st Madman.* What 's he ? a rope-maker ?

*2nd Madman.* No, no, no, a snuffing knave that, while he shows the tombs, will have his hand in a wench's placket.

*3rd Madman.* Woe to the caroche that brought home my wife from the mask at three o'clock in the morning ! it had a large featherbed in it. 102

*4th Madman.* I have pared the devil's nails forty times, roasted them in raven's eggs, and cured agues with them.

*3rd Madman.* Get me three hundred milch-bats, to make possets to procure sleep.

*4th Madman.* All the college may throw their caps at me : I have made a soap-boiler costive ; it was my masterpiece.

110

[*Here the dance, consisting of Eight Madmen, with music answerable thereunto ; after which, BOSOLA, like an old man, enters.*

*Duch.* Is he mad too ?

*Serv.* Pray, question him. I 'll leave you.  
[*Exeunt Servant and Madmen.*

*Bos.* I am come to make thy tomb.

*Duch.* Ha ! my tomb !

Thou speak'st as if I lay upon my death-bed,  
Gasping for breath : dost thou perceive me sick ?

*Bos.* Yes, and the more dangerously, since thy sickness is insensible.

116

*Duch.* Thou art not mad, sure : dost know me ?

*Bos.* Yes.

*Duch.* Who am I ?

*Bos.* Thou art a box of worm-seed, at best but a salvatory of green mummy. What 's this flesh ? a little cruddled milk, fantastical puff-paste. Our bodies are weaker than those paper-prisons boys used to keep flies in ; more contemptible, since ours is to preserve earthworms. Didst thou ever see a lark in a cage ? Such is the soul in the body : this world is like her little turf of grass, and the heaven o'er our heads like her looking-glass, only gives us a miserable knowledge of the small compass of our prison.

*Duch.* Am not I thy duchess ?

128

*Bos.* Thou art some great woman, sure, for riot begins to sit on thy iorehead (clad in gray hairs) twenty years sooner than on a merry milk-maid's. Thou sleepest worse than if a mouse should be forced to take up her lodging in a cat's ear : a little infant that breeds its teeth, should it lie with thee, would cry out, as if thou wert the more unquiet bedfellow.

*Duch.* I am Duchess of Malfi still.

*Bos.* That makes thy sleep so broken :  
Glories, like glow-worms, afar off shine bright,  
But, look'd to near, have neither heat nor light.

*Duch.* Thou art very plain.

140

*Bos.* My trade is to flatter the dead, not the living :  
I am a tomb-maker.

*Duch.* And thou comest to make my tomb ?

*Bos.* Yes.

*Duch.* Let me be a little merry :—  
Of what stuff wilt thou make it ?

*Bos.* Nay, resolve me first, of what fashion ?

*Duch.* Why, do we grow fantastical on our deathbed ?  
Do we affect fashion in the grave ?

*Bos.* Most ambitiously. Princes' images on their  
tombs

150

Do not lie, as they were wont seeming to pray  
Up to heaven ; but with their hands under their cheeks,  
As if they died of the tooth-ache : they are not ~~carved~~  
With their eyes fixed upon the stars ; but as  
Their minds were wholly bent upon the world,  
The selfsame way they seem to turn their faces.

*Duch.* Let me know fully therefore the effect  
Of this thy dismal preparation.  
This talk fit for a charnel.

*Bos.* Now I shall :—

*Enter Executioners, with a coffin, cords, and a bell.*

Here is a present from your princely brothers ;      160  
And may it arrive welcome, for it brings  
Last benefit, last sorrow.

*Duch.* Let me see it :  
I have so much obedience in my blood,  
I wish it in their veins to do them good.

*Bos.* This is your last presence-chamber.

*Cari.* O my sweet lady !

*Duch.* Peace ; it affrights not me,  
*Bos.* I am the common bellman

That usually is sent to condemn'd persons  
The night before they suffer.

*Duch.* Even now

Thou said'st thou wast a tomb-maker.

*Bos.*

'T was to bring you

By degrees to mortification. Listen.

171

Hark, now everything is still,

The screech-owl and the whistler shrill

Call upon our dame aloud,

And bid her quickly don her shroud !

Much you had of land and rent ;

Your length in clay's now competent :

A long war disturb'd your mind ;

Here your perfect peace is sign'd.

Of what is 't fools make such vain keeping ?

180

Sin their conception, their birth weeping,

Their life a general mist of error,

Their death a hideous storm of terror.

Strew your hair with powders sweet,

Don clean linen, bathe your feet,

And (the foul fiend more to check)

A crucifix let bless your neck :

'T is now full tide 'tween night and day ;

End your groan, and come away.

*Cari.* Hence, villains, tyrants, murderers ! alas ! 190

What will you do with my lady ?—Call for help.

*Duch.* To whom ? to our next neighbours ! they are  
madfolks.

*Bos.* Remove that noise.

*Duch.* Farewell, Cariola.

In my last will I have not much to give :

A many hungry guests have fed upon me ;

Thine will be a poor reversion.

*Cari.* I will die with her.

*Duch.* I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy

Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl

Say her prayers ere she sleep.

[CARIOLA is forced out by the Executioners.

Now what you please :

What death ?

200

*Bos.* Strangling ; here are your executioners.

*Duch.* I forgive them :

The apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o' the lungs  
Would do as much as they do.

*Bos.* Doth not death fright you ?

*Duch.* Who would be afraid on 't,  
Knowing to meet such excellent company  
In the other world ?

*Bos.* Yet, methinks,  
The manner of your death should much afflict you :  
This cord should terrify you.

*Duch.* Not a whit :  
What would it pleasure me to have my throat cut 210  
With diamonds ? or to be smothered  
With cassia ? or to be shot to death with pearls ?  
I know death hath ten thousand several doors  
For men to take their exit ; and 't is found  
They go on such strange geometrical hinges,  
You may open them both ways : any way, for heaven-  
sake,

So I were out of your whispering. Tell my brothers  
That I perceive death, now I am well awake,  
Best gift is they can give or I can take.

I would fain put off my last woman's fault, 220  
I'd not be tedious to you.

*1st Execut.* We are ready.

*Duch.* Dispose my breath how please you ; but my  
body  
Bestow upon my women, will you ?

*1st Execut.* Yes.

*Duch.* Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength  
Must pull down heaven upon me :—  
Yet stay ; heaven-gates are not so highly arch'd  
As princes' palaces ; they that enter there  
Must go upon their knees [Kneels].—Come, violent  
death,

Serve for mandragora to make me sleep!—

Go tell my brothers, when I am laid out,

They then may feed in quiet.

230

[*The Executioners strangle the DUCHESS.*

*Bos.* Where's the waiting-woman?

Fetch her: some other strangle the children.

[*CARIOLA and Children are brought in by the Executioners; who presently strangle the Children.*

Look you, there sleeps your mistress.

*Cari.* O, you are damn'd

Perpetually for this! My turn is next;

Is 't not so order'd?

*Bos.* Yes, and I am glad

You are so well prepar'd for 't.

*Cari.* You are deceiv'd, sir,

I am not prepar'd for 't, I will not die;

I will first come to my answer, and know

How I have offended.

*Bos.* Come, despatch her. 240

You kept her counsel; now you shall keep ours.

*Cari.* I will not die, I must not; I am contracted  
To a young gentleman.

*1st Execut.* Here's your wedding-ring.

*Cari.* Let me but speak with the duke. I'll discover  
Treason to his person.

*Bos.* Delays:—throttle her.

*1st Execut.* She bites and scratches.

*Cari.* If you kill me now,  
I am damn'd; I have not been at confession  
This two years.

*Bos.* [to Executioners.] When?

*Cari.* I am quick with child.

*Bos.* Why, then,  
Your credit's saved. [Executioners strangle CARIOLA.  
Bear her into the next room;

Let these lie still.

[*Exeunt the Executioners with the body of CARIOLA.*

*Enter FERDINAND.*

*Ferd.* Is she dead ?

*Bos.* She is what 250

You 'd have her. But here begin your pity :

[Shows the Children strangled.

Alas, how have these offended ?

*Ferd.* The death

Of young wolves is never to be pitied.

*Bos.* Fix your eye here.

*Ferd.* Constantly.

*Bos.* Do you not weep ?

Other sins only speak ; murder shrieks out :

The element of water moistens the earth,

But blood flies upwards and bedews the heavens.

*Ferd.* Cover her face ; mine eyes dazzle : she died young.

*Bos.* I think not so ; her infelicity

Seem'd to have years too many.

260

*Ferd.* She and I were twins ;

And should I die this instant, I had liv'd

Her time to a minute.

*Bos.* It seems she was born first :

You have bloodily approv'd the ancient truth,

That kindred commonly do worse agree

Than remote strangers.

*Ferd.* Let me see her face

Again. Why didst thou not pity her ? what

An excellent honest man mightst thou have been,

If thou hadst borne her to some sanctuary !

Or, bold in a good cause, oppos'd thyself,

270

With thy advancèd sword above thy head,

Between her innocence and my revenge !

I bade thee, when I was distracted of my wits,

Go kill my dearest friend, and thou hast done 't.

For let me but examine well the cause :

What was the meanness of her match to me ?

Only I must confess I had a hope,

Had she continu'd widow, to have gain'd  
 An infinite mass of treasure by her death :  
 And what was the main cause ? her marriage, 280  
 That drew a stream of gall quite through my heart.  
 For thee, as we observe in tragedies  
 That a good actor many times is curs'd  
 For playing a villain's part, I hate thee for 't.  
 And, for my sake, say, thou hast done much ill well.

*Bos.* Let me quicken your memory, for I perceive  
 You are falling into ingratitude : I challenge  
 The reward due to my service.

*Ferd.* I 'll tell thee  
 What I 'll give thee.

*Bos.* Do.  
*Ferd.* I 'll give thee a pardon  
 For this murder.

*Bos.* Ha !  
*Ferd.* Yes, and 't is 290  
 The largest bounty I can study to do thee.  
 By what authority didst thou execute  
 This bloody sentence ?

*Bos.* By yours.  
*Ferd.* Mine ! was I her judge ?  
 Did any ceremonial form of law  
 Doom her to not-being ? did a complete jury  
 Deliver her conviction up i' the court ?  
 Where shalt thou find this judgment register'd,  
 Unless in hell ? See, like a bloody fool,  
 Thou 'st forfeited thy life, and thou shalt die for 't. 300

*Bos.* The office of justice is perverted quite  
 When one thief hangs another. Who shall dare  
 To reveal this ?

*Ferd.* O, I 'll tell thee ;  
 The wolf shall find her grave, and scrape it up,  
 Not to devour the corpse, but to discover  
 The horrid murder.

*Bos.* You, not I, shall quake for 't.  
*Ferd.* Leave me.

*Bos.* I will first receive my pension.

*Ferd.* You are a villain.

*Bos.* When your ingratitude  
Is judge, I am so.

*Ferd.* O horror,  
That not the fear of him which binds the devils 310  
Can prescribe man obedience !—  
Never look upon me more.

*Bos.* Why, fare thee well.  
Your brother and yourself are worthy men :  
You have a pair of hearts are hollow graves,  
Rotten, and rotting others ; and your vengeance,  
Like two chain'd bullets, still goes arm in arm :  
You may be brothers ; for treason, like the plague,  
Doth take much in a blood. I stand like one  
That long hath ta'en a sweet and golden dream :  
I am angry with myself, now that I wake. 320

*Ferd.* Get thee into some unknown part o' the world,  
That I may never see thee.

*Bos.* Let me know  
Wherefore I should be thus neglected. Sir,  
I serv'd your tyranny, and rather strove  
To satisfy yourself than all the world :  
And though I loath'd the evil, yet I lov'd  
You that did counsel it ; and rather sought  
To appear a true servant than an honest man.

*Ferd.* I'll go hunt the badger by owl-light :  
'T is a deed of darkness. [Exit. 330

*Bos.* He's much distracted. Off, my painted  
honour !

While with vain hopes our faculties we tire,  
We seem to sweat in ice and freeze in fire.  
What would I do, were this to do again ?  
I would not change my peace of conscience  
For all the wealth of Europe.—She stirs ; here's life :—  
Return, fair soul, from darkness, and lead mine  
Out of this sensible hell :—she's warm, she breathes :—  
Upon thy pale lips I will melt my heart,

To store them with fresh colour.—Who's there !      340  
Some cordial drink !—Alas ! I dare not call :  
So pity would destroy pity.—Her eye opes,  
And heaven in it seems to ope, that late was shut,  
To take me up to mercy.

*Duch.* Antonio !

*Bos.*      Yes, madam, he is living ;  
The dead bodies you saw were but feign'd statues :  
He's reconcil'd to your brothers ; the Pope hath wrought  
The atonement.

*Duch.*      Mercy !

[Dies.]

*Bos.* O, she 's gone again ! there the cords of life  
broke.

O sacred innocence, that sweetly sleeps      350  
On turtles' feathers, whilst a guilty conscience  
Is a black register wherein is writ  
All our good deeds and bad, a perspective  
That shows us hell ! That we cannot be suffer'd  
To do good when we have a mind to it !  
This is manly sorrow ;  
These tears, I am very certain, never grew  
In my mother's milk : my estate is sunk  
Below the degree of fear : where were  
These penitent fountains while she was living ?      360  
O, they were frozen up ! Here is a sight  
As direful to my soul as is the sword  
Unto a wretch hath slain his father. Come,  
I'll bear thee hence,  
And execute thy last will ; that's deliver  
Thy body to the reverend dispose  
Of some good women : that the cruel tyrant  
Shall not deny me. Then I'll post to Milan,  
Where somewhat I will speedily enact  
Worth my dejection.      [Exit.]      370

## ACT V.

SCENE I. *Milan. A public place.*

*Enter ANTONIO and DELIO.*

*Ant.* What think you of my hope of reconciliation  
To the Arragonian brethren ?

*Delio.* I misdoubt it :  
For though they have sent their letters of safe-conduct  
For your repair to Milan, they appear  
But nets to entrap you. The Marquis of Pescara,  
Under whom you hold certain land in cheat,  
Much 'gainst his noble nature hath been mov'd  
To seize those lands ; and some of his dependants  
Are at this instant making it their suit  
To be invested in your revenues. 10  
I cannot think that they mean well to your life  
That do deprive you of your means of life,  
Your living.

*Ant.* You are still an heretic  
To any safety I can shape myself.

*Delio.* Here comes the marquis : I will make myself  
Petitioner for some part of your land,  
To know whither it is flying.

*Ant.* I pray, do.

*Enter PESCARA.*

*Delio.* Sir, I have a suit to you.

*Pes.* To me ?

*Delio.* An easy one :  
There is the Citadel of Saint Bennet,  
With some demesnes, of late in the possession 20  
Of Antonio Bologna,—please you bestow them on me.

*Pes.* You are my friend ; but this is such a suit,  
Nor fit for me to give, nor you to take.

*Delio.* No, sir ?

*Pes.* I will give you ample reason for 't  
Soon in private :—here's the cardinal's mistress.

*Enter JULIA.*

*Julia.* My lord, I am grown your poor petitioner,  
And should be an ill beggar, had I not  
A great man's letter here, the cardinal's,  
To court you in my favour. [Gives a letter.

*Pes.* He entreats for you  
The Citadel of Saint Bennet, that belong'd 30  
To the banish'd Bologna.

*Julia.* Yes.

*Pes.* I could not have thought of a friend I could  
rather.

Pleasure with it : 't is yours.

*Julia.* Sir, I thank you ;  
And he shall know how doubly I am engag'd  
Both in your gift, and speediness of giving,  
Which makes your grant the greater. [Exit.

*Ant.* How they fortify  
Themselves with my ruin !

*Delio.* Sir, I am  
Little bound to you.

*Pes.* Why ?  
*Delio.* Because you denied this suit to me, and gave 't  
To such a creature.

*Pes.* Do you know what it was ? 40  
It was Antonio's land ; not forfeited  
By course of law, but ravish'd from his throat  
By the cardinal's entreaty : it were not fit  
I should bestow so main a piece of wrong  
Upon my friend ; 't is a gratification  
Only due to a strumpet, for it is injustice.  
Shall I sprinkle the pure blood of innocents

To make those followers I call my friends  
Look ruddier upon me ? I am glad  
This land, ta'en from the owner by such wrong, 50  
Returns again unto so foul an use  
As salary for his lust. Learn, good Delio,  
To ask noble things of me, and you shall find  
I 'll be a noble giver.

*Delio.* You instruct me well.

*Ant.* Why, here's a man now would fright impud'nce  
From sauciest beggars.

*Pes.* Prince Ferdinand's come to Milan,  
Sick, as they give out, of an apoplexy ;  
But some say 't is a frenzy : I am going  
To visit him. [Exit.

*Ant.* 'T is a noble old fellow.

*Delio.* What course do you mean to take, Antonio ?

*Ant.* This night I mean to venture all my fortune, 61  
Which is no more than a poor lingering life,  
To the cardinal's worst of malice : I have got  
Private access to his chamber ; and intend  
To visit him about the mid of night,  
As once his brother did our noble duchess.  
It may be that the sudden apprehension  
Of danger,—for I'll go in mine own shape,—  
When he shall see it fraught with love and duty,  
May draw the poison out of him, and work 70  
A friendly reconcilement : if it fail,  
Yet it shall rid me of this infamous calling ;  
For better fall once than be ever falling.

*Delio.* I 'll second you in all danger ; and howe'er  
My life keeps rank with yours.

*Ant.* You are still my lov'd and best friend. [Exeunt.

SCENE II. *A gallery in the residence of the CARDINAL and FERDINAND.**Enter PESCARA and DOCTOR.**Pes.* Now, doctor, may I visit your patient?*Doc.* If 't please your lordship: but he's instantly  
To take the air here in the gallery  
By my direction.*Pes.* Pray thee, what's his disease?*Doc.* A very pestilent disease, my lord,  
They call lycanthropia.*Pes.* What's that?  
I need a dictionary to 't.*Doc.* I'll tell you.  
In those that are possess'd with 't there o'erflows  
Such melancholy humour they imagine  
Themselves to be transform'd into wolves; 10  
Steal forth to church-yards in the dead of night,  
And dig dead bodies up: as two nights since  
One met the duke 'bout midnight in a lane  
Behind Saint Mark's church, with the leg of a man  
Upon his shoulder; and he howl'd fearfully;  
Said he was a wolf, only the difference  
Was, a wolf's skin was hairy on the outside,  
His on the inside; bade them take their swords,  
Rip up his flesh, and try: straight I was sent for,  
And, having minister'd to him, found his grace 20  
Very well recover'd.*Pes.* I am glad on 't.*Doc.* Yet not without some fear  
Of a relapse. If he grow to his fit again,  
I'll go a nearer way to work with him  
Than ever Paracelsus dream'd of; if  
They'll give me leave, I'll buffet his madness out of  
him.  
Stand aside; he comes.

*Enter FERDINAND, CARDINAL, MALATESTI, and BOSOLA.*

*Ferd.* Leave me.

*Mal.* Why doth your lordship love his solitariness ?

*Ferd.* Eagles commonly fly alone : they are crows, daws, and starlings that flock together. Look, what 's that follows me ?

32

*Mal.* Nothing, my lord.

*Ferd.* Yes.

*Mal.* 'T is your shadow.

*Ferd.* Stay it ; let it not haunt me.

*Mal.* Impossible, if you move, and the sun shine.

*Ferd.* I will throttle it.

[*Throws himself down on his shadow.*

*Mal.* O, my lord, you are angry with nothing.

*Ferd.* You are a fool : how is 't possible I should catch my shadow, unless I fall upon 't ? When I go to hell, I mean to carry a bribe ; for, look you, good gifts evermore make way for the worst persons.

43

*Pes.* Rise, good my lord.

*Ferd.* I am studying the art of patience.

*Pes.* 'T is a noble virtue.

*Ferd.* To drive six snails before me from this town to Moscow ; neither use goad nor whip to them, but let them take their own time ;—the patient'st man i' the world match me for an experiment :—and I 'll crawl after like a sheep-biter.

51

*Card.* Force him up.

[*They raise him.*

*Ferd.* Use me well, you were best. What I have done, I have done : I 'll confess nothing.

*Doc.* Now let me come to him.—Are you mad, my lord ?

Are you out of your princely wits ?

*Ferd.*

What 's he ?

*Card.*

Your doctor.

*Ferd.* Let me have his beard sawed off, and his eye-brows

Filed more civil.

*Doc.* I must do mad tricks with him,  
For that's the only way on 't.—I have brought  
Your grace a salamander's skin to keep you 60  
From sun-burning.

*Ferd.* I have cruel sore eyes.

*Doc.* The white of a cockatrix's egg is present  
remedy.

*Ferd.* Let it be a new-laid one, you were best.  
Hide me from him: physicians are like kings,—  
They brook no contradiction.

*Doc.* Now he begins  
To fear me: now let me alone with him.

*Card.* How now! put off your gown?

*Doc.* Let me have some forty vessels filled with rose-water: he and I'll go pelt one another with them.—Now he begins to fear me.—Can you fetch a frisk, sir? —Let him go, let him go, upon my peril: I find by his eye he stands in awe of me; I'll make him as tame as a dormouse. 73

*Ferd.* Can you fetch your frisks, sir!—I will stamp him into a cullis, flay off his skin, to cover one of the anatomies this rogue hath set i' the cold yonder in Barber-Chirurgeon's-hall.—Hence, hence! you are all of you like beasts for sacrifice: there's nothing left of you but tongue and belly, flattery and lechery. [Exit.

*Pes.* Doctor, he did not fear you thoroughly. 80

*Doc.* True; I was somewhat too forward.

*Bos.* Mercy upon me, what a fatal judgment  
Hath fall'n upon this Ferdinand!

*Pes.* Knows your grace  
What accident hath brought unto the prince  
This strange distraction?

*Card.* [Aside.] I must feign somewhat.—Thus they  
say it grew.  
You have heard it rumour'd, for these many years  
None of our family dies but there is seen  
The shape of an old woman, which is given  
By tradition to us to have been murder'd 90

By her nephews for her riches. Such a figure  
 One night, as the prince sat up late at 's book,  
 Appear'd to him ; when crying out for help,  
 The gentleman of 's chamber found his grace  
 All on a cold sweat, alter'd much in face  
 And language : since which apparition,  
 He hath grown worse and worse, and I much fear  
 He cannot live.

*Bos.* Sir, I would speak with you.

*Pes.* We 'll leave your grace,  
 Wishing to the sick prince, our noble lord, 100  
 All health of mind and body.

*Card.* You are most welcome.

[*Exeunt* PESCARA, MALATESTI, and DOCTOR.  
 Are you come ? so.—[*Aside.*] This fellow must not  
 know

By any means I had intelligence  
 In our duchess' death ; for, though I counsell'd it,  
 The full of all the engagement seem'd to grow  
 From Ferdinand.—Now, sir, how fares our sister ?  
 I do not think but sorrow makes her look  
 Like to an oft-dy'd garment : she shall now  
 Take comfort from me. Why do you look so wildly ?  
 O, the fortune of your master here the prince 110  
 Dejects you ; but be you of happy comfort :  
 If you 'll do one thing for me I 'll entreat,  
 Though he had a cold tomb-stone o'er his bones,  
 I 'd make you what you would be.

*Bos.* Any thing ;  
 Give it me in a breath, and let me fly to 't :  
 They that think long small expedition win,  
 For musing much o' the end cannot begin.

*Enter JULIA.*

*Julia.* Sir, will you come in to supper ? "

*Card.* I am busy ; leave me.

*Julia* [*Aside.*] What an excellent shape hath that  
 fellow !

[*Exit.*

*Card.* 'T is thus. Antonio lurks here in Milan : 120  
 Inquire him out, and kill him. While he lives,  
 Our sister cannot marry ; and I have thought  
 Of an excellent match for her. Do this, and style me  
 Thy advancement.

*Bos.* But by what means shall I find him out ?

*Card.* There is a gentleman call'd Delio  
 Here in the camp, that hath been long approv'd  
 His loyal friend. Set eye upon that fellow ;  
 Follow him to mass ; may be Antonio,  
 Although he do account religion

But a school-name, for fashion of the world 130  
 May accompany him ; or else go inquire out  
 Delio's confessor, and see if you can bribe  
 Him to reveal it. There are a thousand ways  
 A man might find to trace him ; as to know  
 What fellows haunt the Jews for taking up  
 Great sums of money, for sure he 's in want ;  
 Or close to go to the picture-makers, and learn  
 Who bought her picture lately : some of these  
 Happily may take.

*Bos.* Well, I 'll not freeze i' the business :  
 I would see that wretched thing, Antonio, 140  
 Above all sights i' the world.

*Card.* Do, and be happy. [Exit.

*Bos.* This fellow doth breed basilisks in 's eyes,  
 He 's nothing else but murder ; yet he seems  
 Not to have notice of the duchess' death.  
 'T is his cunning : I must follow his example ;  
 There cannot be a surer way to trace  
 Than that of an old fox.

*Re-enter JULIA.*

*Julia.* So, sir, you are well met.

*Bos.* . How now !

*Julia.* Nay, the doors are fast enough :  
 Now, sir, I will make you confess your treachery. 150

*Bos.* Treachery !

*Julia.* Yes, confess to me  
Which of my women 't was you hir'd to put  
Love-powder into my drink ?

*Bos.* Love-powder !

*Julia.* Yes, when I was at Malfi.  
Why should I fall in love with such a face else ?  
I have already suffer'd for thee so much pain,  
The only remedy to do me good  
Is to kill my longing.

*Bos.* Sure, your pistol holds  
Nothing but perfumes or kissing-comfits.  
Excellent lady !

You have a pretty way on 't to discover  
Your longing. Come, come, I 'll disarm you,  
And arm you thus : yet this is wondrous strange.

*Julia.* Compare thy form and my eyes together,  
You 'll find my love no such great miracle.  
Now you 'll say  
I am wanton : this nice modesty in ladies  
Is but a troublesome familiar  
That haunts them.

*Bos.* Know you me, I am a blunt soldier.

*Julia.* The better :  
Sure, there wants fire where there are no lively sparks  
Of roughness.

*Bos.* And I want compliment.

*Julia.* Why, ignorance  
In courtship cannot make you do amiss,  
If you have a heart to do well.

*Bos.* You are very fair.

*Julia.* Nay, if you lay beauty to my charge,  
I must plead unguilty.

*Bos.* Your bright eyes  
Carry a quiver of darts in them sharper  
Than sun-beams.

*Julia.* You will mar me with commendation,  
Put yourself to the charge of courting me,  
Whereas now I woo you.

160

169

170

180

*Bos. [Aside.]* I have it, I will work upon this creature.—

Let us grow most amorously familiar :  
If the great cardinal now should see me thus,  
Would he not count me a villain ?

*Julia.* No ; he might count me a wanton,  
Not lay a scruple of offence on you ;  
For if I see and steal a diamond,  
The fault is not i' the stone, but in me the thief  
That purloins it. I am sudden with you :  
We that are great women of pleasure use to cut off 190  
These uncertain wishes and unquiet longings,  
And in an instant join the sweet delight  
And the pretty excuse together. Had you been i' the  
street,  
Under my chamber-window, even there  
I should have courted you.

*Bos.* O, you are an excellent lady !

*Julia.* Bid me do somewhat for you presently  
To express I love you.

*Bos.* I will ; and if you love me,  
Fail not to effect it. •  
The cardinal is grown wondrous melancholy ; 200  
Demand the cause, let him not put you off  
With feign'd excuse ; discover the main ground  
on 't.

*Julia.* Why would you know this ?

*Bos.* I have depended on him,  
And I hear that he is fall'n in some disgrace  
With the emperor : if he be, like the mice  
That forsake falling houses, I would shift  
To other dependance.

*Julia.* You shall not need follow the wars :  
I'll be your maintenance.

*Bos.* And I your loyal servant :  
But I cannot leave my calling.

*Julia.* Not leave an ungrateful  
General for the love of a sweet lady ! 211

You are like some cannot sleep in feather-beds,  
But must have blocks for their pillows.

*Bos.* Will you do this ?

*Julia.* Cunningly.

*Bos.* To-morrow I'll expect the intelligence.

*Julia.* To-morrow I get you into my cabinet ;  
You shall have it with you. Do not delay me,  
No more than I do you : I am like one  
That is condemn'd ; I have my pardon promis'd,  
But I would see it seal'd. Go, get you in : 220  
You shall see me wind my tongue about his heart  
Like a skein of silk.

[Exit BOSOLA.

*Re-enter CARDINAL.*

*Card.* Where are you ?

*Enter Servants.*

*Servants.*

Here.

*Card.* Let none, upon your lives,  
Have conference with the Prince Ferdinand,  
Unless I know it.—[*Aside.*] In this distraction  
He may reveal the murther. [Exeunt Servants.  
Yond's my lingering consumption :  
I am weary of her, and by any means  
Would be quit of.

*Julia.* How now, my lord ! what ails you ?

*Card.* Nothing.

*Julia.* O, you are much alter'd : 230  
Come, I must be your secretary, and remove  
This lead from off your bosom : what's the matter ?

*Card.* I may not tell you.

*Julia.* Are you so far in love with sorrow  
You cannot part with part of it ? or think you  
I cannot love your grace when you are sad  
As well as merry ? or do you suspect  
I, that have been a secret to your heart

These many winters, cannot be the same  
Unto your tongue ?

*Card.* Satisfy thy longing,—  
The only way to make thee keep my counsel  
Is, not to tell thee.

240

*Julia.* Tell your echo this,  
Or flatterers, that like echoes still report  
What they hear though most imperfect, and not me ;  
For if that you be true unto yourself,  
I 'll know.

*Card.* Will you rack me ?

*Julia.* No, judgment shall  
Draw it from you : it is an equal fault,  
To tell one's secrets unto all or none.

*Card.* The first argues folly.

*Julia.* But the last tyranny.

*Card.* Very well : why, imagine I have committed  
Some secret deed which I desire the world  
May never hear of.

251

*Julia.* Therefore may not I know it ?  
You have conceal'd for me as great a sin  
As adultery. Sir, never was occasion  
For perfect trial of my constancy  
Till now : sir, I beseech you —

*Card.* You 'll repent it.

*Julia.* Never.

*Card.* It hurries thee to ruin : I 'll not tell thee.  
Be well advis'd, and think what danger 't is  
To receive a prince's secrets : they that do,  
Had need have their breasts hoop'd with adamant  
To contain them. I pray thee, yet be satisfied ;  
Examine thine own frailty ; 't is more easy  
To tie knots than unloose them : 't is a secret  
That, like a lingering poison, may chance lie  
Spread in thy veins, and kill thee seven year hence.

260

*Julia.* Now you dally with me.

*Card.* No more ; thou shalt know it.  
By my appointment the great Duchess of Malfi

And two of her young children, four nights since,  
Were strangl'd.

*Julia.* O heaven ! sir, what have you done !

*Card.* How now ? how settles this ? think you your bosom

271

Will be a grave dark and obscure enough  
For such a secret ?

*Julia.* You have undone yourself, sir.

*Card.* Why ?

*Julia.* It lies not in me to conceal it.

*Card.* No ?

Come, I will swear you to 't upon this book.

*Julia.* Most religiously.

*Card.* Kiss it. [She kisses the book.

Now you shall never utter it ; thy curiosity

Hath undone thee : thou 'rt poison'd with that book :

Because I knew thou couldst not keep my counsel,

I have bound thee to 't by death.

280

*Re-enter BOSOLA.*

*Bos.* For pity-sake, hold !

*Card.* Ha, Bosola !

*Julia.* I forgive you

This equal piece of justice you have done ;

For I betray'd your counsel to that fellow :

He over-heard it ; that was the cause I said

It lay not in me to conceal it.

*Bos.* O foolish woman.

Couldst thou not have poison'd him ?

*Julia.* 'T is weakness,

Too much to think what should have been done. I go,  
I know not whither.

[Dies

*Card.* Wherefore com'st thou hither ?

*Bos.* That I might find a great man like yourself,  
Not out of his wits as the Lord Ferdinand,

291

To remember my service.

*Card.* I 'll have thee hew'd in pieces,

*Bos.* Make not yourself such a promise of that life  
Which is not yours to dispose of.

*Card.* Who plac'd thee here ?

*Bos.* Her lust, as she intended.

*Card.* Very well :  
Now you know me for your fellow-murderer.

*Bos.* And wherefore should you lay fair marble  
colours  
Upon your rotten purposes to me ?  
Unless you imitate some that do plot great treasons,  
And when they have done, go hide themselves i' the  
grave

300

Of those were actors in 't ?

*Card.* No more ;  
There is a fortune attends thee.

*Bos.* Shall I go sue to Fortune any longer ?  
'T is the fool's pilgrimage.

*Card.* I have honours in store for thee.  
*Bos.* There are many ways that conduct to seeming  
Honour, and some of them very dirty ones.

*Card.* Throw to the devil  
Thy melancholy. The ~~fire~~ burns well ;  
What need we keep a stirring of 't, and make  
A greater smother ? Thou wilt kill Antonio ?

*Bos.* Yes.

*Card.* Take up that body.

*Bos.* I think I shall  
Shortly grow the common bier for church-yards.

*Card.* I will allow thee some dozen of attendants  
To aid thee in the murder.

*Bos.* O, by no means. Physicians that apply horse-  
leeches to any rank swelling use to cut off their tails,  
that the blood may run through them the faster : let  
me have no train when I go to shed blood, lest it make  
me have a greater when I ride to the gallows.

320

*Card.* Come to me after midnight, to help to  
remove  
That body to her own lodging : I 'll give out

She died o' the plague ; 't will breed the less inquiry  
After her death.

*Bos.* Where's Castruccio her husband ?

*Card.* He's rode to Naples, to take possession  
Of Antonio's citadel.

*Bos.* Believe me, you have done a very happy turn.

*Card.* Fail not to come : there is the master-key  
Of our lodgings ; and by that you may conceive  
What trust I plant in you.

*Bos.* You shall find me ready.

[*Exit CARDINAL.*

O poor Antonio, though nothing be so needful      331  
To thy estate as pity, yet I find

Nothing so dangerous ! I must look to my footing :  
In such slippery ice-pavements men had need  
To be frost-nail'd well, they may break their necks else ;  
The precedent's here afore me. How this man  
Bears up in blood ! seems fearless ! Why, 't is well ;  
Security some men call the suburbs of hell,  
Only a dead wall between. Well, good Antonio,

I 'll seek thee out ; and all my care shall be      340

To put thee into safety from the reach  
Of these most cruel biters that have got  
Some of thy blood already. It may be,  
I 'll join with thee in a most just revenge :  
The weakest arm is strong enough that strikes  
With the sword of justice. Still methinks the duchess  
Haunts me : there, there !—'T is nothing but my  
melancholy.

O Penitence, let me truly taste thy cup,  
That throws men down only to raise them up !      [*Exit.*

SCENE III. *A Fortification.*

Enter ANTONIO and DELIO.

*Delio.* Yond 's the cardinal's window. This fortification  
 Grew from the ruins of an ancient abbey ;  
 And to yond side o' the river lies a wall,  
 Piece of a cloister, which in my opinion  
 Gives the best echo that you ever heard,  
 So hollow and so dismal, and withal  
 So plain in the distinction of our words,  
 That many have suppos'd it is a spirit  
 That answers.

*Ant.* I do love these ancient ruins.  
 We never tread upon them but we set  
 Our foot upon some reverend history :  
 And, questionless, here in this open court,  
 Which now lies naked to the injuries  
 Of stormy weather, some men lie interr'd  
 Lov'd the church so well, and gave so largely to 't.  
 They thought it should have canopied their bones  
 Till dooms-day ; but all things have their end :  
 Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men,  
 Must have like death that we have.

*Echo.* *Like death that we have.*

*Delio.* Now the echo hath caught you. 20

*Ant.* It groan'd methought, and gave  
 A very deadly accent.

*Echo.* *Deadly accent.*

*Delio.* I told you 't was a pretty one : you may make  
 it  
 A huntsman, or a falconer, a musician,  
 Or a thing of sorrow.

*Echo.* *A thing of sorrow.*

*Ant.* Ay, sure that suits it best,

*Echo.* *That suits it best.*

*Ant.* 'T is very like my wife's voice.

*Echo.**Ay, wife's voice.*

*Delio.* Come, let us walk further from 't.  
I would not have you go to the cardinal's to-night :  
Dō not.

*Echo.**Do not. 30*

*Delio.* Wisdom doth not more moderate wasting  
sorrow

Than time : take time for 't ; be mindful of thy safety.

*Echo. Be mindful of thy safety.*

*Ant.* Necessity compels me ;  
Make scrutiny through the passages  
Of your own life, you 'll find it impossible  
To fly your fate.

*Echo. O, fly your fate !*

*Delio.* Hark ! the dead stones seem to have pity on  
you,

And give you good counsel.

*Ant.* Echo, I will not talk with thee,  
For thou art a dead thing. 40

*Echo. Thou art a dead thing.*

*Ant.* My duchess is asleep now,  
And her little ones, I hope sweetly : O heaven,  
Shall I never see her more ?

*Echo. Never see her more.*

*Ant.* I mark'd not one repetition of the echo  
But that ; and on the sudden a clear light  
Presented me a face folded in sorrow.

*Delio. Your fancy merely.*

*Ant.* Come, I 'll be out of this ague,  
For to live thus is not indeed to live ;  
It is a mockery and abuse of life : 50  
I will not henceforth save myself by halves ;  
Lose all, or nothing.

*Delio. Your own virtue save you !*

I 'll fetch your eldest son, and second you :  
It may be that the sight of his own blood  
Spread in so sweet a figure may beget  
The more compassion. However, fare you well.

Though in our miseries Fortune have a part,  
Yet in our noble sufferings she hath none :  
Contempt of pain, that we may call our own. [Exeunt.

SCENE IV. *An apartment in the residence of the CARDINAL and FERDINAND.*

Enter CARDINAL, PESCARA, MALATESTI, RODERIGO, and GRISOLAN.

Card. You shall not watch to-night by the sick prince ;  
His grace is very well recover'd.  
Mal. Good my lord, suffer us.  
Card. O, by no means ;  
The noise, the change of object in his eye,  
Doth more distract him : I pray, all to bed ;  
And though you hear him in his violent fit,  
Do not rise, I entreat you.

Pes. So, sir ; we shall not.  
Card. Nay, I must have you promise  
Upon your honours, for I was enjoin'd to 't  
By himself ; and he seem'd to urge it sensibly. 10

Pes. Let our honours bind this trifle.  
Card. Nor any of your followers.  
Mal. Neither.  
Card. It may be, to make trial of your promise,  
When he 's asleep, myself will rise and feign  
Some of his mad tricks, and cry out for help,  
And feign myself in danger.

Mal. If your throat were cutting,  
I 'd not come at you, now I have protested against it.

Card. Why, I thank you.

[Withdraws to the upper end of the apartment.

Gris. 'T was a foul storm to-night.

*Rod.* The Lord Ferdinand's chamber shook like an osier. 21

*Mal.* 'T was nothing but pure kindness in the devil

To rock his own child. [*Exeunt all except the CARDINAL.*]

*Card.* The reason why I would not suffer these About my brother is because at midnight

I may with better privacy convey

Julia's body to her own lodging. O, my conscience!

I would pray now; but the devil takes away my heart

For having any confidence in prayer.

About this hour I appointed Bosola

30

To fetch the body: when he hath serv'd my turn,

He dies.

[*Exit.*]

*Enter BOSOLA.*

*Bos.* Ha! 't was the cardinal's voice; I heard him name

Bosola and my death. Listen; I hear one's footing.

*Enter FERDINAND.*

*Ferd.* Strangling is a very quiet death.

*Bos.* [*Aside.*] Nay, then, I see I must stand upon my guard.

*Ferd.* What say [you] to that? whisper softly; do you agree to 't? So; it must be done i' the dark: the cardinal would not for a thousand pounds the doctor should see it. [*Exit.*]

*Bos.* My death is plotted; here's the consequence of murder. 41

We value not desert nor Christian breath, When we know black deeds must be cur'd with death.

*Enter ANTONIO and Servant.*

*Serv.* Here stay, sir, and be confident, I pray :  
I 'll fetch you a dark lantern. [Exit.]

*Ant.* Could I take him at his prayers,  
There were hope of pardon.

*Bos.* Fall right, my sword !— [Stabs him.]  
I 'll not give thee so much leisure as to pray.

*Ant.* O, I am gone ! Thou hast ended a long suit  
In a minute.

*Bos.* What art thou ?

*Ant.* A most wretched thing,  
That only have thy benefit in death, 52  
To appear myself.

*Re-enter Servant with a lantern.*

*Serv.* Where are you, sir ?

*Ant.* Very near my home.—Bosola !

*Serv.* O, misfortune !

*Bos.* Smother thy pity, thou art dead else.—Antonio !  
The man I would have sav'd 'bove mine own life !

We are merely the stars' tennis-balls, struck and  
banded

Which way please them.—O good Antonio, 60

I 'll whisper one thing in thy dying ear

Shall make thy heart break quickly ! thy fair duchess  
And two sweet children—

*Ant.* Their very names  
Kindle a little life in me.

*Bos.* Are murder'd.

*Ant.* Some men have wish'd to die  
At the hearing of sad tidings ; I am glad  
That I shall do 't in sadness : I would not now  
Wish my wounds balm'd nor heal'd, for I have no  
use

To put my life to. In all our quest of greatness,  
Like wanton boys whose pastime is their care,  
We follow after bubbles blown in the air.  
Pleasure of life, what is 't ? only the good hours

Of an ague ; merely a preparative to rest,  
 To endure vexation. I do not ask King Lear  
 The process of my death ; only commend me  
 To Delio.

*Bos.* Break, heart !

*Ant.* And let my son fly the courts of princes. [Dies.

*Bos.* Thou seem'st to have lov'd Antonio.

*Serv.* I brought him hither, 80  
 To have reconcil'd him to the cardinal.

*Bos.* I do not ask thee that.

Take him up, if thou tender thine own life,  
 And bear him where the lady Julia

Was wont to lodge.—O, my fate moves swift !

I have this cardinal in the forge already ;

Now I'll bring him to the hammer. O direful  
 misprision !

I will not imitate things glorious,

No more than base ; I'll be mine own example.— King Lear

On, on, and look thou represent, for silence, 90  
 The thing thou bar'st. [Exeunt.

SCENE V. *Another apartment in the same.*

*Enter CARDINAL, with a book.*

*Card.* I am puzzled in a question about hell ;  
 He says, in hell there's one material fire,  
 And yet it shall not burn all men alike.  
 Lay him by. How tedious is a guilty conscience !  
 When I look into the fish-ponds in my garden,  
 Methinks I see a thing arm'd with a rake,  
 That seems to strike at me.

*Enter BOSOLA, and Servant bearing ANTONIO's body.*

Now, art thou come ?

Thou look'st ghastly :

There sits in thy face some great determination  
Mix'd with some fear.

10

*Bos.* Thus it lightens into action :  
I am come to kill thee.

*Card.* Ha !—Help ! our guard !

*Bos.* Thou art deceiv'd ;  
They are out of thy howling.

*Card.* Hold ; and I will faithfully divide  
Revenues with thee.

*Bos.* Thy prayers and proffers  
Are both unseasonable.

*Card.* Raise the watch ! we are betray'd !

*Bos.* I have confin'd your flight :  
I 'll suffer your retreat to Julia's chamber,

20

But no further.

*Card.* Help ! we are betray'd !

*Enter, above, PESCARA, MALATESTI, RODERIGO, and  
GRISOLAN.*

*Mal.* Listen.

*Card.* My dukedom for rescue !

*Rod.* Fie upon his counterfeiting !

*Mal.* Why, 't is not the cardinal.

*Rod.* Yes, yes, 't is he :

But I 'll see him hang'd ere I 'll go down to him.

*Card.* Here 's a plot upon me ; I am assaulted ! I  
am lost,

Unless some rescue !

*Gris.* He doth this pretty well ; 30

But it will not serve to laugh me out of mine honour.

*Card.* The sword 's at my throat !

*Rod.* You would not bawl so loud then.

*Mal.* Come, come, let 's go

To bed : he told us this much beforehand.

*Pes.* He wish'd you should not come at him ; but, believe 't,  
The accent of the voice sounds not in jest :  
I 'll down to him, howsoever, and with engines  
Force ope the doors. [Exit above.]

*Rod.* Let's follow him aloof,  
And note how the cardinal will laugh at him.

[*Exeunt, above, MALATESTI, RODERIGO,*  
*and GRISOLAN.*]

*Bos.* There 's for you first, 40  
'Cause you shall not unbarricade the door  
To let in rescue. [Kills the Servant.]

*Card.* What cause hast thou to pursue my life ?

*Bos.* Look there.

*Card.* Antonio !

*Bos.* Slain by my hand unwittingly.  
Pray, and be sudden : when thou kill'dst thy sister,  
Thou took'st from Justice her most equal balance,  
And left her naught but her sword.

*Card.* O, mercy !

*Bos.* Now it seems thy greatness was only outward ;  
For thou fall'st faster of thyself than calamity 49  
Can drive thee. I 'll not waste longer time ; there !  
[*Stabs him.*]

*Card.* Thou hast hurt me.

*Bos.* Again ! [*Stabs him again.*]

*Card.* Shall I die like a leveret,

Without any resistance ?—Help, help, help !  
I am slain !

*Enter FERDINAND.*

*Ferd.* The alarum ! give me a fresh horse ;  
Rally the vaunt-guard, or the day is lost,  
Yield, yield ! I give you the honour of arms  
Shake my sword over you ; will you yield ?

*Card.* Help me ; I am your brother !

*Ferd.* The devil !  
My brother fight upon the adverse party !

[*He wounds the CARDINAL, and, in the scuffle, 1 gives BOSOLA his death-wound.* There flies your ransom. — *Enter RODERIGO.* 60

*Card.* O justice !  
I suffer now for what hath former bin :  
Sorrow is held the eldest child of sin.

*Ferd.* Now you're brave fellows. Cæsar's fortune was harder than Pompey's ; Cæsar died in the arms of prosperity, Pompey at the feet of disgrace. You both died in the field. The pain's nothing : pain many times is taken away with the apprehension of greater, as the tooth-ache with the sight of a barber that comes to pull it out : there's philosophy for you. ✓ 70

*Bos.* Now my revenge is perfect.—Sink, thou main cause [Kills FERDINAND. Of my undoing !—The last part of my life Hath done me best service.

*Ferd.* Give me some wet hay ; I am broken-winded. I do account this world but a dog-kennel : I will vault credit and affect high pleasures 1 i Beyond death.

*Bos.* He seems to come to himself, Now he's so near the bottom.

*Ferd.* My sister, O my sister ! there's the cause on 't. C.F. Crush. Consideration. Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust, 1 i old Comus 80 Like diamonds, we are cut with our own dust. [Dies.

*Card.* Thou hast thy payment too.

*Bos.* Yes, I hold my weary soul in my teeth ; 'T is ready to part from me. I do glory That thou, which stood'st like a huge pyramid Begun upon a large and ample base, Shalt end in a little point, a kind of nothing.

*Enter, below, PESCARA, MALATESTI, RODERIGO and GRISOLAN.*

*Pes.* How now, my lord !

*Mal.* O sad disaster !

*Rod.* How comes this ?

*Bos.* Revenge for the Duchess of Malfi murder'd

By the Aragonian brethren ; for Antonio 90

Slain by this hand ; for lustful Julia

Poison'd by this man ; and lastly for myself,

That was an actor in the main of all

Much 'gainst mine own good nature, yet i' the end

Neglected.

*Pes.* How now, my lord !

*Card.* Look to my brother :

He gave us these large wounds, as we were struggling

Here i' the rushes. And now, I pray, let me

Be laid by and never thought of. [Dies.]

*Pes.* How fatally, it seems, he did withstand

His own rescue !

*Mal.* Thou wretched thing of blood, 100

How came Antonio by his death ?

*Bos.* In a mist ; I know not how : *c. v. cardo of plenimo*

Such a mistake as I have often seen

In a play. O, I am gone !

We are only like dead walls or vaulted graves,

That, ruin'd, yield no echo. Fare you well.

It may be pain, but no harm, to me to die

In so good a quarrel. ( O, this gloomy world !

In what a shadow, or deep pit of darkness,

Doth womanish and fearful mankind live !

110

Let worthy minds ne'er stagger in distrust

To suffer death or shame for what is just :

Mine is another voyage.)

[Dies.]

*Pes.* The noble Delio, as I came to the palace,  
Told me of Antonio's being here, and show'd me  
A pretty gentleman, his son and heir.

*Enter DELIO, and ANTONIO's Son.*

*Mal.* O sir, you come too late !

*Delio.* I heard so, and  
Was arm'd for 't, ere I came. Let us make noble use *unum*  
Of this great ruin ; and join all our force  
To establish this young hopeful gentleman 120  
In 's mother's right. These wretched eminent things  
Leave no more fame behind 'em, than should one  
Fall in a frost, and leave his print in snow ;  
As soon as the sun shines, it ever melts,  
Both form and matter. I have ever thought  
Nature doth nothing so great for great men  
As when she 's pleas'd to make them lords of truth :  
Integrity of life is fame's best friend,  
Which nobly, beyond death, shall crown the end.

[*Exeunt.*]

